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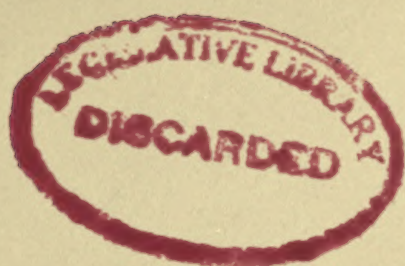
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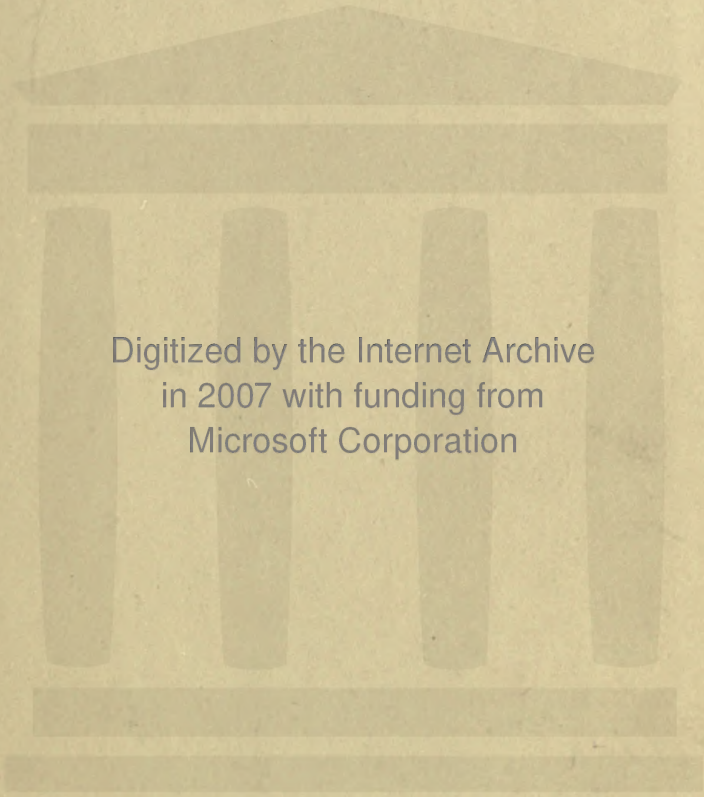
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THE WORKS OF

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

WITH A GENERAL INTRODUCTION BY

JULES CLARETIE



Sister Anne



TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY

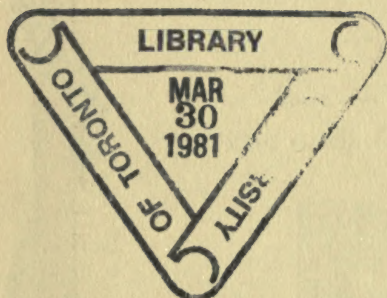
MARY HANFORD FORD



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CHAPTER I

A MIDNIGHT WALK. MY AUNT'S FIVE HUNDRED FRANCS

AT all the theatres the plays were played out, the restaurateurs were closing their cafés, the tradesmen had long since closed their shops. The traffic of the streets had lessened, and the foot-passengers had become few and far between. The cabs rolled swiftly along with their last fares. The street reflectors were burning brightly, while the houses began to look more and more sombre as the gas within them was extinguished. The streets of Paris, as well as the good inhabitants of that capital, were about to enjoy the hours of repose.

Repose, however, may be likened to good weather in that it is never general, for one may often enjoy it in Paris when there is war in another part of the globe; and when we are enjoying a most mild and agreeable temperature, within a hundred leagues of us, perhaps, a storm destroys the harvests or a tempest submerges vessels. Since peace and fine weather cannot be universal, let us seek to enjoy each one of these things when we possess it and not trouble our-

selves, at the same time, about what our neighbors are doing, and how they are faring in these respects.

A gentleman who had no desire to sleep walked back and forth in the almost silent and deserted streets of Paris. For more than an hour he had been pacing the boulevards, from the Rue du Temple to the Rue de Poissonnière ; but as it was impossible for him to occupy all his time in making this round he occasionally walked up as far as the Faubourgs without, however, appearing to notice where he was going ; but presently he would stop, look all about him, and mutter to himself, —

“ What the devil am I doing here ? ” Then he would immediately retrace his steps to the boulevards he had just left.

The gentleman who pursued this eccentric course at such an untimely hour of the night might have been about thirty years old. He was of middle height, and rather stout than thin. His face was neither homely nor handsome ; his eyes were a trifle round, and too prominent ; his nose, although not flat, had neither the nobleness of the Greek nor the seductive charm of the aquiline. The gentleman had, nevertheless, what would be called a striking physiognomy. He possessed the art of rendering his features mobile, and of making them express any sentiment or feeling he wished to seem to experience. This is a talent as valuable

in the world as in the theatre. We play the comedy everywhere, and there are people at court, through the city, in palaces, in drawing-rooms and boudoirs, even in antechambers, who are supreme in the art of feigning what they do not feel.

The costume of our promenader was neither elegant nor shabby. His dress was that of a man who is accustomed to society, but who does not care to call attention to the cut of his coat or the color of his trousers. In fact, his bearing corresponded to his dress, and indicated no pretension. Perhaps you will say to me that a man does not assume a lolling air, or a light and attractive manner, when walking alone and so late on the boulevards of Paris. I will have the honor to reply to you, that I am painting the portrait of a man as he was ordinarily, and that I have not waited until this moment to make his acquaintance.

Now that you have some idea of this personage, would you like to know what occupied him upon the boulevards so late at night, and why he did not return home and go to bed? To discover this, let us listen to him as he talks to himself. He walked on, with his two hands in his pockets, his manner as tranquil as if it were only eight o'clock in the evening.

"I had a presentiment of what has happened to me! I did not want to visit that little Delphine. I might still have my five hundred francs in my

pocket. But she is so charming, this little Delphine! She wrote me such a sweet note! Am I still silly enough to be fooled with all that, when I know the world, and especially women?

"If I had put only a hundred crowns in my pocket, I would still have something left. But no: I wished to play the gentleman, and I have gambled like a fool! The little gentleman who won from me turned back the king mighty often! Ahem! That's not clear! What is clear is that I have not a sou; that my landlord has put me out of his furnished house, because I didn't pay. For four miserable louis! The Arab! I was going to pay him yesterday, with the five hundred francs my old aunt sent me; then the invitation of this little Delphine came to upset all my plans of wisdom. Poor Dubourg! You are incorrigible, my friend, and yet you are old enough to begin to know better."

Here Dubourg — for now we know his name — drew a snuffbox from his pocket and paused to take a pinch.

"O, my sole consolation, my faithful companion!" he went on, regarding his snuffbox with an air that was almost tender; "it is fortunate that you are only shell, for otherwise I should have pawned you long ago. — But let me think. What the devil am I to do? I have no employment, these government officials are so absurd! I only earned fifteen hundred francs, and I wasn't

going to work harder than my superior, who had twice as much. In fact, I should have worked only half as hard. As my under chief came down at noon and left at four o'clock, and passed the time between these hours in reading the papers, cutting his pens, gossiping, warming himself at the stove in winter, enjoying the fresh air in summer, I thought it quite proper to arrive no sooner than he, and to stay no later, to spend an hour over the *Moniteur*, three-quarters of an hour over the *Constitutionnel*, and five minutes over the *Débats*; to look at my pen a long time before dipping it in the ink; to gaze at the business before me, but not touch it; to turn over a bundle of papers for an hour, and put it back in its place without ever having intended to write a line; finally, to consume as much time getting a bit of lunch as it would have required to go from Paris to Saint Cloud.

“This conduct was dictated by a spirit of justice, but it was not according to the taste of my chiefs. These gentlemen wished to force me to long hours of work, in order that they might have more leisure. They considered me very shiftless, because I wanted to imitate them. They complained of me to the ministry, and I was dismissed. To be sure, they offered me a little later the privileges of reëntering as a probationer, but I did not consider myself worthy of such a favor.

"I entered a banking house. Ah, what a difference! There, the chiefs set the example of hard work. From the first clerk to the last, every employé entered the office at eight o'clock and stayed till five, and returned at seven to remain until ten. During this time there was not one moment of rest; it was always writing or figuring; if a little conversation was permitted, it was only in copying a letter, or opening an account. No holidays! Every day postboys coming in and postboys going out. No one could do too much; and one day, when I left the office some minutes before ten o'clock, a cursed German, who had already passed forty-five years of his life over a ledger, said, looking at his watch,—

"'You are in one pig hurry dis efening!'

"Good Heavens! I could not endure it there! This animal life destroyed my health; and one fine morning, when they gave me a reprimand, because I had gone to take a little tonic at the neighboring café, I seized my hat and bade farewell to the houses of banking and commerce.

"I thought I would like to be a notary, but I was too absent-minded. I allowed a record of death to be signed for a marriage contract, and a power of attorney for a will, and they decided I had mistaken my calling.

"I had a place with an old attorney. Ah! that was pretty good for a while. He had a wife, already growing old, who loved the promenade,

and she chose me for her cavalier. The husband was thus freed from accompanying his wife, and found it excellent that I should go everywhere with her. I believe he would have named me first clerk, if I would have agreed to promenade madame all my life. But I grew tired of beaung around a figure à la Pompadour, and a face that might have been inside a chief justice's cap! I ceased to be attentive to madame, the husband fell into a bad humor, and sent me away. Oh, times! Oh, manners!

“From that day I renounced office work. I felt in my heart a noble independence, an intense love of liberty. I applied myself now to doing nothing,—a superb avocation, and one for which everyone is fitted; a charming profession when it is supported by a long entry in the government ledger, representing investments in bonds. Unfortunately, I am only entered on the ledgers of my tailor, my bootmaker and my restaurant-keeper! I am an orphan. My parents left me little, and that little could not last long, especially with me; for I am neither avaricious, economical nor prudent. I want money only for the pleasure of spending it. My father — honest Breton! — followed the profession of medicine. He should have been rich, but probably in his time there were not enough colds, fevers and bad airs. He left me only a respectable name which, in spite of my follies, I wish to keep respectable. One may be honest, though rather a worthless fellow.

“When I had spent my modest heritage I felt myself a philosopher. I had a desire to write like Seneca, in scorn of riches. But Seneca had a fortune of forty millions when he wrote in that way. He understood his subject better than I who had not a sou. Then, as we should write only of what we know, and I know nothing of riches, I have not written.

“Fortunately, I have an old aunt in Brittany who has never married. The good woman has only a moderate fortune, but she has not abandoned her nephew. It is true I have written her very touching letters. Poor dear woman! she believes me married. My faith! Not knowing what means to employ to obtain money, in my last letter I made myself all at once husband and father of a family. By the stroke of a pen, I have three children — triplets!

“That is how I happened to receive the note for five hundred francs, which I lost at *écarté* — cursed *écarté*! I have sworn never to play again. I am in bad luck this month! But how could I resist? I arrived at the house of this little Delphine. Since she left the theatre she receives the best people in Paris,—all artists, journalists, authors, English noblemen, Russians, and Tartars — ah, yes, Tartars! I think that gentleman with whom I played was a bit of a Greek! To pass eighteen times in succession — that is too much. And that other imbecile, who killed himself to offer

me punch every time I lost, as if I could drink the value of five hundred francs! Ah, my poor aunt, if you knew where your money had gone! The worst of it is that she will not send me any more for a long time. I cannot make a confinement every month, though I've given myself a wife to soften my aunt's heart. I have already attributed to her two illnesses, and the triplets have endured every accident of childhood. I myself have had inflammation of the lungs and jaundice. But there shall be an end of all this! No, my poor aunt, you shall not be importuned any more. No! You shall no longer be deprived of so many little comforts for your rascal of a nephew. I have abused your confidence too much. I blush that I have depended on it so often. I feel in my heart a noble pride, and when I think of your last gift of five hundred francs! I've been stuck on the fourth six times. Oh, it is shocking!"

Dubourg walked a little more quickly. He took his hands out of his pockets, as if furious at not finding anything there, but calmed himself at length, resumed his ordinary gait, and presently cried out: "But what the devil shall I do?"

At that moment there passed him one of those persons whose business it is to remove the ill-smelling and offensive offal of our city life. They work at night, because they deal with objects we avoid in the daytime. The man had a basket on his back and a hook in his hand.

"There at least is a resource," commented Dubourg, observing the man under the street lamp. "But I confess I have not yet the courage to make use of it. Though some author has said, 'It is not the profession that honors the man, but the man the profession,' I doubt whether anyone would honor me much if I held that little hook, even if I had with the basket the wisdom of Cato, the clemency of Titus and the virtues of Marcus Aurelius.

"Besides, I have some talents, and I am not yet reduced to that. I love the arts; I adore them! I was born to be an artist. I do not know how to draw, I cannot play any instrument, and I cannot make verses very easily; but in spite of that I love painting, music and poetry. If I went on the stage, I believe I should be a success. But it is a little late, at thirty, to make your *début*. Then, too, how would it do for the son of a doctor of Rennes to mount the boards of a theatre? But why not? Louis XIV did it. He played before his court; and surely, if I had been in Racine's place, far from dissuading him from his fancy, I should have created for him superb rôles. Our authors of today would not be so devoid of tact. Also, our authors of today are rich, while those of Racine's time were poor.

"But I cannot make my *début* tomorrow, and tomorrow I must dine. A desperate question to answer, when I have neither money nor credit.

Never mind, Dubourg! Don't be discouraged. Keep up your gayety, the coolness which has never abandoned you yet. Remember that it is fine to know how to endure misfortune; that a great heart only shows courage in disaster. Ah, yes! I can say this very well while my stomach is full of the cakes and punch and biscuits from mademoiselle's table, but when I am hungry I am afraid I may be a bad philosopher.

"In misfortune we have recourse to our friends. But in misfortune we have no friends. Still, sometimes men are not such egoists as they seem to be. Ah, how could I forget him! Frederic! Yes, he alone would be useful to me. Frederic is only twenty years old. He still sees the world as we see it at that age, and when eighteen years of that time have been passed under the eyes of a father and a tutor. Frederic is good, generous, sensitive, — too sensitive, indeed! But I am not the one to blame him for yielding too much to the promptings of his heart. He has obliged me several times; — never mind, he will do so again, I am sure, if he can. I must find Frederic."

Dubourg, by a mechanical movement, put his hand to his watch pocket to know the hour. Then he sighed, exclaiming: "Unlucky dog! you have never been able to keep one a week. Ah, my poor aunt! If I only had that five hundred francs."

The night grew black. Drops of rain began to fall. The cabs had ceased to break the silence of

the night. The street lamps threw only a feeble and vacillating light. "It must be very late," said Dubourg, looking about him. "Frederic lives in the hotel with his father, the Count of Montreville. How dare I present myself there now? The Count, his father, is a little severe. He is not a comedy father, to wind about your finger. They say, on the contrary, that he exacts from his son the most implicit obedience, and that the latter trembles before him. Oh, no doubt his severity is exaggerated; besides, he scarcely knows me. I have gone quite frequently to the hotel, but he has rarely seen me. Frederic's apartment is in another part of the building anyway; so I'll go on."

Dubourg, who had finally emerged from the circle he had been traversing so long, turned his steps eagerly towards the Rue de Provence, where the hotel of the Count of Montreville was situated.

The nearer he approached the dwelling of Frederic, the fainter grew his hope of seeing him before the morrow. Ought he to disturb the entire hotel at that hour? In awaking the son he must waken the father, and it certainly would not be a favorable introduction to the Count, to rouse him at two o'clock in the morning.

Dubourg reasoned thus with himself, but kept walking on just the same, like the lover who never wishes to see again the maiden who has been false to him; yet he walks back and forth before her home, and ends by entering her presence, still re-

peating, "I will not see her!" Thus it is reason which counsels, but passion which guides us! Poor humans! Are we to be blamed, then, if passion so often leads us astray?

As he approached the hotel the eyes of Dubourg were agreeably surprised by the sight of a double line of carriages, which made the street brilliant with their lanterns. He quickened his pace. The carriages were in the greatest number before the hotel of the Count of Montreville. The large porte cochère was open, the court filled with landaus, coaches and vis-à-vis. The coachmen chatted together, the servants ran back and forth, the valets swore at everything. The obscurity of the night was driven away by the lamps on the spurstones and on the grand staircase. Delicious music floated on the air, from within the hotel, where the beautiful salon glittered with the light of a thousand candles, and contrasted with the melancholy silence which reigned a little farther away.

Dubourg no longer walked: he ran, he leaped, he flew. The lights, the noise of the crowd, the sound of the instruments playing for the square dances, chased from his spirit the somewhat serious reflections which had begun to weigh upon him.

"It is an evening party!" he cried. "A ball! What an imbecile I am! Surely, this is Tuesday, the Count's reception day, and he gives most delightful entertainments. Frederic has invited me several times, because he wished to present me to

his father. Ah, it depended only upon myself to be introduced into most delightful circles, and to meet people who would have pushed me in fine society. But, alas! I could not be wise, and tear myself from those cursed billiards. Wait! I recognize that. It is by Rossini,—a three-step! I danced it at Vauxhall with a big blonde.”

Dubourg entered the court. He passed the carriages, the lackeys, the coachmen. No one paid the slightest attention to him, and if he had been in evening dress he could have mingled with the guests, could have danced, or taken a hand at *écarté*, without meeting the host; for at these large reunions it is impossible for the master of the house to be certain of having seen and greeted every one he has received.

Dubourg remained outside, before the large salon where the dancing was going on. He stepped away from the stairway covered with lamps, in order not to be too plainly in sight, and watched the ballroom and the dancers from the shadow of a large coach. He was for a moment tempted to enter the salon; but, glancing at his dress, he felt that it was not the time to present himself to the Count, who was something of a stickler for etiquette. He wore a blue coat with metal buttons, boots, and a black tie. That might do very well at the house of Mademoiselle Delphine, where he went to play *écarté* and to talk nonsense with his hostess; but it would not be a fitting garb in

which to present himself at the reception of M. de Montreville.

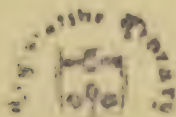
Dubourg murmured again, glancing from his costume to the dancing figures within the hall:—

“Ah, if I had only kept my aunt’s five hundred francs, I could easily have been the best-looking gentleman there.”

Many of the windows were open on account of the heat, and Dubourg watched the dancers, observing the ladies with pleasure as they passed back and forth. Presently he noticed a green table in the smaller salon, at which two middle-aged gentlemen had just seated themselves. Soon the players were surrounded by a little crowd, and the table was covered with gold.

In order to look more easily into the little salon, Dubourg mounted behind the carriage near which he stood. In this way he could see the game perfectly, and even mark the play of one of the gentlemen, who sat directly opposite the window.

“They are lucky fellows,” he said to himself. “They are playing *écarté*. The game is warm! There are at least thirty louis on the table. If I still had that money of my aunt’s, I could match them easily. But what am I saying? If I ever touch cards again! Wait! they are playing the very game on which I lost, and I ought to have won. It should be played according to rule. What is he doing now? He is going to ask for the cards!”



In his excitement Dubourg forgot that he was in the court and mounted behind a carriage. He began to shout:—

“Don’t ask! Play that! Play that, I tell you! I’ll be responsible for it!”

The voice of Dubourg filled the players with astonishment. They turned, looked about them, and inquired the cause of the disturbance.

“Who is that interfering?” asked the old gentleman whose turn it was to play. “Has he more on the game than I have, and does that give him the right to speak so? Answer me, gentlemen!”

“The voice was from the court,” said a young man near the window.

“From the court—from the court! And are those rascals of lackeys allowed to watch us, and speak as they please?”

The old gentleman, with hair powdered white, rose, and looked into the court. Dubourg jumped hastily down from the carriage, and the movement which this gave to the vehicle startled the horses so that they beat the pavement with their hoofs, and tried to break away. The sleepy coachmen rubbed their eyes and roused themselves, believing the ball was over; those who had been gossiping ran and mounted to their places; and the men in the street, seeing the movement near the hotel, hurried to do likewise; while the coachman and guard of the carriage from which Dubourg had jumped down endeavored to quiet their

horses and keep them from disturbing the entire line. While this was going on Dubourg walked quietly the length of the house, disgusted with himself. "Must I always be doing something idiotic?" he murmured. "I have thrown about thirty coachmen and as many lackeys into a state of excitement, and have got myself nearly crushed to death by the horses besides, and all because I wished to advise that old gentleman, who doesn't know the game, and who deals the cards when he should play. Well, I've learned a lesson, and I'll bother myself no more about other people's affairs."

In walking along the wall Dubourg had stopped before the door of a basement room, as a valet was coming out to discover the cause of the noise in the court.

He was opposite Dubourg, who recognized him immediately as the attendant of Frederic, and hastened to stop him.

"Where is your master, Germain?"

"Ah, is it you, monsieur?" exclaimed the valet, who knew Dubourg, as he had often seen him visiting his young master. "Are you coming to the ball?"

"No, no: I don't wish to dance. Where is your master, I asked you."

"Oh, Monsieur Frederic is dancing. There are lots of pretty girls in there, and you know Monsieur Frederic is susceptible."

"The devil! I wanted to speak to him. I have something very important to say to him, and at the same time I don't want to disturb him, or to go into the ballroom. You see I am not in evening dress."

"Listen, monsieur. I can take you to Monsieur Frederic's apartment, and you can wait there quietly till he comes."

"That's a delicious idea, Germain. Show me to Frederic's room as quickly as possible."

Germain took a candle and conducted Dubourg, who was delighted that he had found a quiet spot where he could finish the night. The valet, who had seen his master show great friendliness for Dubourg, was certain that he would not be blamed for what he had done.

They reached the apartment of the young man, which was quite a distance from the ballroom, so that the music could scarcely be heard there.

"Shall I tell my master that you are here?" asked Germain, placing his candle on the table.

"No, it is not necessary," replied Dubourg. "I will read until he comes. Oh, I am not in any special hurry. Let him dance as long as he pleases."

Germain went out, leaving Dubourg alone. He stretched himself on a great couch, and threw the book he had taken far from him.

"To the devil with books!" he murmured, while he sought the most comfortable position for.

sleeping. "It is time that I rested. I have won out pretty well. Dance away, you others. I prefer this couch, especially when I came so near sleeping in the street. Here I am installed with Monsieur le Comte de Montreville, who has an income of at least thirty thousand livres, and who has only one son, whose friend I am, and whose education I would like to complete. They have poured a lot of things into his head, and have left out the most essential of all,—a knowledge of the human heart, and especially of the feminine heart. As I am learned in this particular direction, I can do something for this good Frederic and teach him to know the world, so that he can make his way as I have done."

While he was talking to himself Dubourg fell into a doze, and it was not five minutes after he had stretched himself on the couch before he was sleeping profoundly.

CHAPTER II

THE COUNT OF MONTREVILLE. A FASHIONABLE RECEPTION

WE begin to make acquaintance with the Count of Montreville at a period when he had reached the age of sixty years. The descendant of a noble and wealthy family, this gentleman had seen service in the army, had married, had retired, and had fortunately managed to escape the storms of the Revolution, which had proved fatal to so many of his order.

The Count was a small thin man, short of stature, whose cold and austere physiognomy inspired respect. He was neither lacking in wit, nor was he infected with a mass of those ridiculous prejudices for things gone by, which some of our old men possess in such an extravagant degree that they would like to bring back into fashion all sorts of bygone monstrosities, such, for instance, as hooped petticoats and bag wigs.

Neither could M. de Montreville be reckoned among the very large number of people who evince no desire for progress either in civilization or national prosperity and who wish to go back while everyone else is advancing; he followed the

impulse of his time, and, wise in the midst of fools, blamed only those who from exaggeration, personal feeling, or incapacity, troubled the water of a river of which all human effort could not stop the flow.

The Count had been severely educated by his father. He was early taught obedience, and wished to find the same submission in his son. At the age of six the little Frederic lost his mother. The Count had no desire to marry again. He had an heir to his name, and that satisfied him. He placed Frederic in one of the best schools in the capital. At fourteen the young man had won several prizes, for he was endowed with a rare intelligence. His education was not finished, but his father feared that at his age he might form some injurious intimacy. He wanted him at home also, and wished to accustom him to a more complete obedience. He removed him from school, therefore, and gave him a tutor.

The tutor whom the Count selected for his son, and with whom we shall later become very well acquainted, was neither a learned man nor one of original ideas. He had, in fact, no such endowment, but was completely under the control of the Count, so that he would not dare to take his pupil for a walk without previously asking permission of M. de Montreville. That is why he was put in charge of Frederic's education, in spite of his lack of fitness in other directions.

The Count loved his son, but he would have been shocked at the idea of revealing to him his tender feeling, and he would have considered that a loss of dignity and a consequent failure of Frederic's respect must follow, if he spoke to him with the simple kindness of a friend. Yet he should have remembered that a father is the first friend whom nature gives, and should the respect he demands of us banish confidence and intimacy? Frederic loved his father, but he trembled in his presence. He was accustomed from infancy never to discuss a point with him, to obey his slightest wishes with promptness. Although he had grown to young manhood, he had retained his habit of passive submission, and still felt a timidity in his father's presence which prevented him from revealing his heart to him frankly. But in justice to the Count of Montreville, it must be confessed that he did not abuse his power over his son. When the boy was eighteen years old, finding his education complete, he sent away the tutor, and, calling his son to his presence, spoke to him as follows:—

“Frederic, I am pleased with you. You have repaid me for the care spent upon your education, and I have nothing to complain of in your character; but you have reached an age when you should begin to know the world. From this time on, I wish you to understand that you have perfect liberty in every way. You will continue to live

in the hotel with me, but you will have your apartments in the main part of the house on the side facing the street; mine, as you know, face the court. In this way you can come and go at any hour without disturbing me. My steward has orders to give you money whenever you ask for it. I know you, and I am sure you will not abuse this privilege. You are at an age when pleasure is usually a temptation. Enjoy yourself to the full; try all the follies of your youth. I mean those which injure neither the heart nor the spirit.

“You are susceptible; you adore all women: but this transport will last only a short time. Be very careful in the relationships which you establish with men of your own age. Do not yield too quickly to friendship. One should be more careful in the choice of a friend than in that of a mistress. I shall not lose sight of you entirely. I hope that the principles I have taught you will keep you from every evil excess, and that I shall not have cause to repent the liberty I have given you.”

Frederic was deeply touched by this discourse, and would have liked to throw himself into his father's arms; but the Count repressed this impulse of tenderness which his own heart shared, and merely extended his hand to Frederic, and allowed him to press it between his own. There was a little unsteadiness in his voice when he added,—

"In a few years I shall decide upon your future course. I will try and find you a suitable wife, but we have not come to that yet. Enjoy your youth, and do not abuse it."

The Count hastened to quit his son after saying these words, for the conversation had touched him. He felt a tear moisten his eyelid, and it would have shocked him to betray to Frederic his real sentiment.

Two years had rolled away since this conversation, during which Frederic had become his own master, and had followed the first impulse of his heart. Possessed of a soul ardent and sensitive, Frederic had experienced very early the temptations of love. At eighteen most young people say, "I must love," as they say, "I must dance," "I must play cards," "I must ride horseback." But the youthful count did not think of love so lightly. His fresh young heart loved, or believed it loved, ardently, and demanded a return in kind; but falseness filled him with anguish, and he could not forget the unfaithfulness of one to whom he had given his love.

Frederic had a fine figure and a charming face, full of sweetness and nobility. His eyes expressed all that his heart experienced, but he had not acquired the light tone and the free and elegant manners of the fashionable young men of the day. He did not swing upon his heels in speaking, he did not smile into the mirror, he did not say

those brilliant nothings which raise a furore in the drawing-room, and he did not gaze passionately into the eyes of the ladies and murmur, "You are adorable." Those swaggering and cavalier manners were approved by the goddess Fashion; and, as the ladies follow her decree before all, they criticised Frederic, found him sentimental, and even a trifle awkward. They shrugged their shoulders when he was mentioned. "Oh, he is not bad, but he needs forming a little."

A fashionable poseuse cannot attach herself to an unformed boy. She may allow herself to cherish a fancy for him, but it is only the experienced and really graceless fellow who can arouse in her a great passion. That is why poor Frederic was always betrayed, and had constant trouble with his love affairs.

It was at Tortoni's café that Frederic had made the acquaintance of Dubourg, and that day the philosopher, who had money in his pocket, threw the whole place into an uproar because he had invited four friends to dine with him. Some strangers were annoyed at the noise these gentlemen made, and tried to compel them to be quiet. Dubourg's only answer was to throw in their faces the remains of his bowl of punch. They rose, making a great outcry. Threats were exchanged, and during the excitement Dubourg's four friends thought it prudent to withdraw.

Dubourg, indignant at the conduct of the

cowards who abandoned him, continued to face his adversaries alone ; and Frederic, placing himself at his side, offered to serve him as second. Dubourg accepted, and there was a duel next day. Dubourg's antagonist was slightly wounded and there were no other consequences ; but the duel cemented the friendship which had begun to form between the two young men. Dubourg, although nearly ten years older than the young count, was far from being as thoughtful or mature as he. His gayety, however, pleased Frederic, who had often need of the sallies of his friend in order to forget the unfaithfulness of his fair ones.

Now that we have made the acquaintance of the Count of Montreville and his son, we can enter his salons, where the most brilliant company was assembled, because, as Dubourg remarked, it was his reception day.

The company was scattered through several salons, all brilliant with the light of many candles. Some danced, some were playing cards. Here and there little groups were engaged in conversation, and others walked up and down or stood at the windows for a breath of air. The heat was very great in the little room where they played *écarté*, and it was almost impossible to get through the crowd of those who were betting.

The ladies were remarkable for the elegance, and sometimes for the originality, of their dress. As a rule, the toilet of the mothers is even more

distinguished than that of the young ladies. Is it because these ladies think their daughters have less need to please, or is it because coquetry increases in an inverse ratio to the reason for its existence? I shall not permit myself to judge of the question. As to the men, it is not so. The ball costume, once adopted, is worn by all, and for those who wish to be original there is no resource in deviation, except a new way of parting the hair or wearing the necktie. Even this last part of the toilet is beginning to be arbitrarily decided.

But it was nearly three o'clock and the evening was drawing to a close. It was the moment when the observer could philosophize a little. There were fewer people dancing, the guests were more at their ease, and laughter more general. Toward the close of the ball, abandon replaces pretension, and many ladies do not begin to be graceful until they have forgotten themselves a little.

A few persons who had not yet had a chance to speak together chatted in a corner of the salon. Some young gentlemen had seized the moment for conversation with the pretty girls whom they led out to dance, and ladies smiled more indulgently upon their cavaliers. The hour had come when all might venture upon a greater intimacy.

M. de Montreville walked about with that amiable manner of the master of the house who understands perfectly how to do the honors. He chatted a little with an elderly marquise who was

alone upon a sofa. He hastened to say a gallant word to an old lady who did not dance, and found time, by the way, to make a pretty compliment to the young dancers. He kept the punch and ices going; he had leisure for a moment at the *écarté* table, and if some one were needed to take a bet he was always ready.

But what was Frederic doing, leaning against the chimneypiece? He appeared to give all his attention to the dance, but was it really the quadrille which absorbed him? And if he thought only of watching the light steps of that pretty girl, why did he seem to repress a hidden suffering? Yes, to the observer, his calm is merely superficial; the smile which comes and goes upon his lips is not at all natural. Frederic is strongly preoccupied, but it is not with the dance.

A few steps from him was seated a young lady who was scarcely twenty years old, though she had been married three years to a notary of sixty, who at that moment was playing *écarté* in the card salon. Madame Dernange was very pretty. Everything about her was fascinating, — her dress, her vivacity, the sparkle of her eye and the brilliancy of her wit. She pleased, she subdued and enchained with the flash of her eye. But, as she knew full well the power of her charms, she sought constantly to increase the number of her adorers. Married at sixteen, she accepted M. Dernange without the slightest preference, but she accepted

him with joy. She longed to be her own mistress, and to devote herself to her taste for coquetry.

With a husband nearly sixty years old, she was pretty certain to do exactly as she pleased; and in fact M. Dernange allowed her entire liberty. She was seen at all the fêtes, at all the balls and at all the receptions. Sometimes her husband accompanied her, but more often he went to bed at the hour of his wife's departure. This did not prevent their having a pleasant home; for it was very easy to be happy with his wife, provided he let her have her own way in everything. M. Dernange was a husband who enjoyed life, and he was enchanted to see his wife amuse herself. Many people were certain that the young wife did not abuse his confidence, and that is possible. She was very coquettish, and coquettes love no one. But it is well not to trust too much to that.

Frederic had not met the brilliant Madame Dernange with indifference. In a moment she had known how to inflame him, and in another moment had perceived her victory. The young Count of Montreville was not a conquest to be disdained. Madame Dernange resolved to fix him to her chariot; and for that she needed only to bestow upon him a few glances, a few smiles, a light pressure of the hand, and those half-whispered words which are so significant when the voice seems to tremble. The coquette employed all these arts with such grace! She did not love,

and therefore knew better how to make herself beloved. The person who really loves has much more difficulty in pleasing than the one who does not love at all; for the selfish coquette knows how to use every advantage, while love, with its natural desire to be attractive, often produces self-conscious awkwardness. Ninon said that, and Ninon knew what she was talking about.

Poor Frederic was very easily the dupe of this clever manœuvring. He believed himself loved, adored, and for some days he lost his head over it; but at his father's reception a young and brilliant colonel had been presented. Here was a man who was quoted for his success with the ladies, for his gallant adventures. He was a man, indeed, whom it would be glorious to number among her adorers, and Madame Dernange promised herself to make a new conquest.

Poor Frederic! This evening you were quite forgotten. She no longer thought of you, but of the handsome colonel. Occasionally a tender word or smile was bestowed upon you, but you were in love and so you were jealous. You perceived easily that the glances of the coquette were fastened upon him whom she wished to ensnare.

The young man approached the brilliant Dernange several times. He wished her to see that he penetrated her perfidy; but the young woman only said to him, smiling, "What is the matter

with you this evening, Monsieur de Montreville? Your serious air is quite amusing."

How consoling such words are to a jealous lover! Frederic made no response, but walked away with his heart full of bitterness, while the coquette went into fits of laughter over some clever jest made by the colonel or another of her adorers. All the evening Frederic had been upon thorns, and toward the close of the ball, observing that Madame Dernange was seated upon a sofa with the colonel beside her, he placed himself near enough to observe them.

He leaned against the chimneypiece, and turned, pretending to be interested in the dancing; but he did not lose a word of what was said upon the sofa. The colonel, amiable and gallant, was evidently paying court to Madame Dernange. The lady called up all her art and coquetted with her usual grace. She laughed so well, she was so pretty, so enchanting, when she wished to please! There was a constant exchange of compliments and spirited repartees, during which poor Frederic was all on fire. If he did not control himself, he should insult the colonel and overwhelm that perfidious woman with reproaches! Happily, he preserved enough common sense to feel the impropriety of such a scene, and the ridicule which it would pour upon him. In all love affairs, the one who complains and is deceived is sure to be laughed at on every side. The old proverb says,

"The vanquished pay the penalty." It would be easy to make a slight variation on this proverb, which would render it more just, except in England, where the husbands get paid when they are what I consider vanquished.

The colonel paid his court in military fashion ; that is, he covered a great deal of ground in a short time. Unfortunately this manner is often extremely successful. Unfortunately, I say, for the timid lovers, because is not that best which makes us most quickly happy? Frederic heard the colonel ask Madame Dernange for permission to call and pay her his respects, — the respects of a colonel of hussars! Frederic broke into a cold perspiration. The pretty creature objected a little; she laughed, she jested; she said that she would have to ask her husband; and then, with fresh laughter, she added, —

"But no, no! It is impossible!"

The colonel was very pressing. M. Dernange would permit him. At last the permission was granted him. Frederic was suffocating. He walked away quickly, for he could endure no more. He passed into an adjoining room where there was no one, for a great number of the guests had now gone.

Frederic threw himself into an arm-chair. The apartment was only feebly lighted by the expiring lamps in their globes of crystal, and now he could give way without restraint to his sorrow. He drew forth his handkerchief, he choked, and the

tears moistened his eyelids. It is usually with tears that we pay our apprenticeship to the world. A few years later and he will laugh at what desolated his heart for the moment. After having been deceived, he will become the deceiver in his turn; but he will never again be so foolish as to attach himself to a coquette. Perhaps he in his turn will break loving hearts, for often the innocent pay the debts of the guilty; and yet it is possible that Frederic may always keep the sensitiveness, the constancy, which make him regret so deeply a heart he has never possessed.

Such words as "flirt," "deceitful," "perfidious," fell from his lips and were followed by long sighs. For more than half an hour he sat lost in bitter thoughts. The candles were extinguished, the noise of the dancing had ceased. Several persons passed before him, without his paying the least attention to them, and he himself was not perceived as he sat in his corner. Some ladies came in search of their wraps, which they had thrown over an ottoman not far from Frederic. But a well-known voice presently pierced his heart. It was that of Madame Dernange. She spoke with one of her friends. These ladies seemed very gay.

"I have had such a pleasant time!" said the wife of the old notary. "This colonel is really very attractive."

"But, my dear friend, did you see how displeased Frederic was?"

"Yes, indeed; I could scarcely keep from laughing at him."

"You have broken his heart."

"Oh, such a misfortune! That young man is really romantic and sentimental enough to give one hysterics. He is a perfect fool!"

"Oh, my dear, don't be unjust! Wait till he has lost his sophomoric air and learned a little of the gallant tone of society, and you will see how distinguished he will be."

"Oh, well, when I am ready to amuse myself again, it will depend entirely on myself. I have only to say a word, to throw him a glance, to make him fall at my feet. But do give me my shawl; you have been holding it for an hour. The colonel is waiting to hand me to my carriage."

The ladies went out. Frederic arose also. He could scarcely credit what he had heard. Disgust, jealousy, anger, tore his heart, where love could no longer keep its place. His vanity had been wounded, and wounded vanity quickly triumphs over love.

It was with such feeling that Frederic returned to his apartment, and in entering he closed the door with such violence that Dubourg sprang up, wide awake.

CHAPTER III

PLANS OF TRAVEL. M. MÉNARD. EN ROUTE

"A POINT on the quart," exclaimed Dubourg, springing up from his couch, while Frederic, who was greatly surprised at finding him there, looked at him for a moment in silence, and then delivered himself without reserve to the pleasure of unburdening his heart, and relating all his troubles to his friend.

"O my dear Dubourg," he exclaimed, "it must be that Heaven has sent you here!"

"Quite otherwise; it is my hard-hearted landlord, who has turned me out of his house into the street."

"I can then, at least, find a heart which will respond to mine, which will understand my sorrow and sympathize with my troubles," said Frederic.

"Have you also been betting on the losing side?"

"She is a flirt! A traitress! A deceiver!"

"My dear boy, fortune is feminine; when one has said that, one has said all."

"Oh, yes, a woman can be very cruel! If you knew what she had dared to say to me!"

"What, has fortune spoken to you?"

"I am only a fool. Yes, in a way she is right. I was a fool to love her; but it is ended. Yes, forever! She believes that a word, a smile, will bring me back to her feet, will enchain me still. Oh, no; I will no longer be her dupe; I know her for what she is now."

Dubourg rubbed his eyes and looked at Frederic, who with a desperate air strode about the chamber. He stood still for a moment, and smote his forehead, smiling bitterly.

"Whom the devil are you talking about?"

"Whom? Of Madame Dernange, of course, — of that woman whose heart is as false as her face is pretty, — of that coquette whom I have adored for the past two months, and who I thought loved me. Well, my dear Dubourg, she has all along been laughing at me."

"And that surprises you? O my poor Frederic, you are young indeed!"

"She has fooled me into believing that she responded to my love, and this evening a new-comer arrived, — a colonel, — and he took her heart from me without any trouble. I wanted to call him out, — to kill this colonel!"

"Would that have made Madame Dernange less of a flirt?"

"No, indeed; that is what I said to myself?"

"In paying court to her he has done what any one else would do in his place. You cannot blame

him ; on the contrary, you ought to be very grateful to him, for he has taught you to know a woman who could jest at your expense."

"I believe you are right," said Frederic, seating himself sorrowfully in an arm-chair ; while Dubourg, who was quite waked up, thought it the proper time to preach a little sermon to his friend.

"Listen, Frederic. I am older than you, and I have seen a great deal of the world. I have had experience, if I have been guilty of some follies. I want to warn you that you have an unfortunate tendency toward sentiment and romantic passion which will be sure to do you an ill turn. You have an intense desire to be loved, adored ; and what the devil is the use ? Do you want to pass your life in sighing ? Do you think a young man ought to make love in that way ? In reality, you are not more constant yourself than anyone else ; for, though I have known you scarcely a year, in that time you have had your seventh passion. The reason you have suffered so much in all this is because in your seven passions all have left you first, and you ought on the contrary to have set them the example.

"But remember, you are always consoled ; and you will get over this one as easily as you have the others, I promise you ; only try and learn not to feel so deeply for what is after all nothing but youthful folly. We must have some sentiment to

please the ladies, but not too much ; for actually, if you grow sentimental, you kill sentiment.

“ All that I am saying to you is very reasonable, and I am sure your father, the Count, would approve it highly if he were here. He would be delighted to see that you have a friend who has given you only good advice, and who will give you much more. Oh, if I only had not lost that five hundred francs that my poor aunt sent me ! ”

Frederic had not paid much attention to Dubourg's moralizing. He had become more calm as it went on, because the most violent crises are always the shortest, and the young man believed himself much more deeply in love than he really was.

“ How does it happen that you are here in the middle of the night ? ” he said, at last, to Dubourg.

“ My friend, how can I tell you ? A succession of unfortunate circumstances. First, my landlord, who is a perfect vulture ; then an evening with little Delphine. You know I took you there once, but as you are always looking for sentiment, you did not go back ; and really, she might have given you for money something as good as you have received from Madame Dernange. Well, my dear, I played, and I lost all I had. I don't know really what will become of me. I thought of you. I know your friendship, and I expected to see you tomorrow ; but when I saw the house all open and lighted up, I thought I might just as well

come in and wait for you here; and while someone whispered to your sweetheart, I have been solving a problem."

"My poor Dubourg!"

"Oh, yes, truly very poor!"

"Listen. I have an idea."

"Let us hear the idea."

"This life in Paris is tiresome to me."

"It will be more tiresome to me, now that I haven't a penny."

"The sight of these coquettish women makes me ill."

"Oh, that is the reason."

"I would like to fly from the false creatures."

"Well, I don't see very well where you could go."

"I hate these receptions and entertainments, where you chat without saying anything, where you have no real affinity for anyone, and where you go for mere distraction rather than for pleasure. All this displeases me. I have only been out in the world two years and a half and I am heartily tired of it. Now, here is my plan."

"Do you wish to become a hermit?"

"No; but I am going to leave Paris for a while. I want to travel,—to see other countries. It is in this way that we strengthen spirit and judgment. It is in comparing the manners and habits of the different people of the world, in learning to understand the wonders and beauties of nature, that

knowledge is deepened; and the heart experiences joys which can never be felt at formal gatherings, where etiquette and idleness reign."

"Well thought out!" said Dubourg, rising from his couch. "It is a good thing to travel, my friend; there is nothing more useful for youth. But when you travel alone you are wearied. You only half enjoy yourself when there is no one to whom you can communicate the sentiment roused by an enchanting view, an ancient monument, or an imposing ruin. Besides, you are too young to run about the world alone. You should have a companion of culture, especially a broad-minded one who has had experience. Well, dear friend, I offer myself as your mentor."

"I was about to propose it, dear Dubourg."

"Indeed! It is with great pleasure—"

"Have you nothing to detain you in Paris?"

"Nothing; not as much as a cot bed."

"Perhaps there is some attachment of the heart."

"Oh, as to attachments, I am not like you. I will make them all along the route; or, it would be better to say, I will make more of them. But that is ended. I shall be wise. I shall settle down. You will be edified at my conduct."

"All right, dear Dubourg; that is decided; we will travel together."

"But there is one little difficulty. How about your father? Will he want you to travel?"

"Oh, I do not think he will oppose it. I have already said something to him about it and he seemed to approve."

"Then everything will go the best in the world; but will you tell him that you intend to take me with you?"

"I will say to him that one of my friends, who is travelling also, will accompany me part of the time."

"All right; arrange everything as you think best, and if necessary, present me to your father. He knows me very slightly, and you will see what a noble and imposing air I can put on. Be careful, though, not to speak of my aunt's money, or of little Delphine, and say nothing about the pretended marriage and the triplets."

"Don't worry."

"As to my family, if it is not noble, it is as good as that of the Count of Montreville, and it is very well thought of in Brittany."

"But, good Heavens, I know all that!"

"I am not saying it for you, but for your father. Well, now, it is settled. See! It is already daylight. I have slept enough, but you need rest. Go to bed, during the day speak to your father, and let me know his reply. I will wait for you at six o'clock at the Rotunda Café."

"It is agreed."

"Oh, I forgot. Lend me a dozen louis. I owe you thirty now, but we will count on the first remittance from my aunt."

"Very good ; but between friends should one count?"

"Dear Frederic ! There are not many friends like you."

Dubourg put in his pocket the ten louis which Frederic gave him. Then he left his friend to sleep, and issued from the hotel, whistling a new air. He went for a walk on the boulevards, as happy as if he had just been given a situation at twelve thousand francs a year, where he would have nothing to do.

In the course of the day Frederic called upon his father. He trembled a little when he broached his plans to the Count, and the elder gentleman, far from encouraging the confidence of his son, waited in silence until he explained what he desired of him. Frederic greeted his father with respect, and began to lay before him the matter so near his heart. He was embarrassed somewhat in this, because the eyes of the Count were fixed constantly upon his face, and seemed to read his most secret thoughts. He made the necessary explanations, however, and waited anxiously for his father's reply.

The Count appeared to reflect, and kept silent for some moments, while Frederic dared not disturb him. At length he spoke.

"You wish to leave Paris, Frederic?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"You are already tired of pleasure, of balls, of receptions? It is rather soon."

Frederic allowed a sigh to escape him and was silent. The Count smiled a little ironically and added,—

“You do not tell everything. Confess that it is some love disappointment.”

Frederic dropped his eyes and blushed. The Count went on in a gentler tone:—

“Oh, well, that is to be expected at your age. Travel; I consent to it. You cannot fail to gain instruction from it, and if I should need your presence I hope that nothing would delay your return.”

“O father! A single word and I shall be with you.”

“Very well; I count upon that.”

“One of my friends, a young man named Dubourg, of an old family in Brittany, thinks of travelling for a while. If you are willing I shall join him.”

“No, monsieur; I do not wish it. I had intended speaking of this Monsieur Dubourg, whom you call your friend, and, though I have only seen him with you two or three times, I know him well enough to prefer that he should not be the travelling companion of my son. His family is honorable, I know; but they say M. Dubourg is a worthless fellow.”

“Father, I assure you — ”

“Do not interrupt me, monsieur. At Paris I cannot prevent your spending your time with such heedless fellows; but when you wish to travel for

instruction and the ripening of your reason, I repeat, your travelling companion should not be a Monsieur Dubourg. I think, too, that you should not take Germain with you. He is not what he was ; and besides, it is better to do without a valet in travelling. With your money you can have ample attention wherever you are."

"I'll go alone then, father?"

"No: you are not yet twenty-one. You are too young to be left entirely to yourself. Wait—yes—there is the very man. M. Ménard will accompany you."

"What, monsieur! My tutor?"

"He has not been your tutor for a long time, and he will not accompany you in that capacity. It will be as a friend, a wise counsellor. M. Ménard is well educated and has a character both sweet and patient. You know him well enough, I think, not to be annoyed at having him for a travelling companion. M. Ménard is not a pedant who would reprove your pleasure. He is a man who will love you, and will, I think, know how to prevent the son of the Count of Montreville from forgetting himself."

"But, father—"

"That is enough. I will write to M. Ménard. If he accepts, as I think he will, by the day after tomorrow you can begin your journey."

Frederic withdrew. He was not very well pleased with his father's choice, although he knew that M.

Ménard was a good and kindly man. He would have preferred to travel with Dubourg, whose constant gayety was a relief from his own sentimental temperament, and, what appears singular at first, is in reality very common. Little men love tall women, and little women love big men. Talkative people love those who are taciturn; gourmands by preference dine only with those who are not so; the strong ally themselves with the feeble; men of genius select housekeepers for wives; literary women rarely ever have gifted men as husbands. Pretentious people can only live with people of simple taste; deceitful people prefer those who are honest. The most refined women often love the most foolish men, and the most fickle will be loved by the most faithful. Indeed, vice is attracted by innocence, and innocence is most easily deceived by worthless fellows. Extremes always meet, contrasts approach, and it is in the comparison of light and shade that a painter produces his most beautiful effects.

"Well," said Dubourg, observing Frederic, who came to meet him at the rendezvous, "what news?"

"Well, not very good."

"Your father does not wish you to travel?"

"On the contrary, he consents to that."

"It seems to me, then, that everything is all right."

"Well, but—he doesn't wish—"

"Why don't you finish?"

"He doesn't wish me to travel with you."

"Because?"

"Because — he says —"

"He says — speak out."

"He says that you are a — good-for-nothing."

"But he has hardly seen me three times!"

"It seems someone has been talking to him."

"There are always people who will calumniate innocence! Do you know that if the Count were not your father — But never mind; he may be partly right, and besides, if he knew how I have reformed, and how moral I have become since yesterday evening. But what more?"

"Well, he wishes me to take for travelling companion my old tutor, M. Ménard."

"Give a young man of twenty-one a tutor! Such things make me ill! Never mind; let Monsieur le Comte alone; we will also do as we please."

"How?"

"You will not be angry if I accompany you, will you?"

"Certainly not."

"And I shall not be sorry to leave Paris for a time; that will give my creditors a little rest, for they are constantly running after me."

"But my father?"

"Never mind; say nothing. I will arrange things quite properly. What sort of man is this tutor?"

"Oh, the best man in the world; but he's not a genius."

"So much the better."

"He thinks a great deal of learning."

"I will speak Latin, Greek, English, Chinese even, if he doesn't understand it."

"I believe he has never travelled, except upon maps."

"I will tell him I have made the tour of the world."

"He is always flattered with people of a certain position."

"I will give myself one which is not slight."

"What is your plan, then?"

"I repeat, I will arrange all that. Go and join your father; make arrangements with your tutor — Ah! see that they give you as much money as possible, for you cannot have too much in travelling. Be sure, also, to tell me the hour of your departure, and the route you will take."

The two young men then separated. Dubourg told Frederic where he could let him know the time for starting, and he revealed nothing further of his own plans.

Let us leave Frederic and Dubourg and seek out M. Ménard, of whom the young count had given such a slight sketch, but whom we must know better before we travel with him. M. Ménard was a man of fifty years, short, broad and full-faced. He had a double chin in good accord with his nose, which was stuck between his cheeks like a fat chestnut. He had red ears like M. Tartuffe and his

florid complexion. His stomach began to trouble him a little, but his abbreviated legs, ornamented with two enormous calves, seemed strong enough to support a still more ponderous machine.

M. Ménard had passed almost all his life in instructing young people. He had cultivated that sweet and benignant manner which a tutor among fashionable people always adopts with his pupils. M. Ménard was not very learned, but he gloried in what he knew, and he was not insensible to praise. His limited talent had become still more contracted because he had exercised it only among children; but M. Ménard was honest, humane and obliging. His one weakness was that he felt himself an inch taller in the presence of a great gentleman; his single fault was a pronounced penchant for the pleasures of the table, and this caused him now and then a slight indisposition. He never drank beyond moderation, but he sometimes returned too often to truffled turkey and salmi of partridge.

The Count of Montreville sent for M. Ménard, who hastened to fulfil his wishes, and who accepted with joy the proposition which was made to him to travel in a comfortable post-chaise with the son of the Count of Montreville, with that one of his pupils who had brought him the most honor. It was a great piece of good fortune for the ex-preceptor, who just then happened to be out of employment.

The Count advised him to watch over Frederic, but not to oppose his fancies in things which concerned the follies of his age. The Count was pleased with the submission his son had shown in accepting his tutor for a companion, and wished to reward him by granting him freedom to go where he pleased.

All was at last arranged between the Count and the two travellers, and the Count sent to M. Ménard quite a large sum of money, which was to be at Frederic's command.

"My son," said the Count, "travel like a man of your rank, but do not waste this money foolishly. By careful management and constant care, I have been able to provide you with a comfortable fortune in anticipation of the time when you will marry. You should not draw upon your principal, but if you need more money let me know through M. Ménard."

Frederic promised his father to be careful, but he had just written to Dubourg that they would set forth the next morning and would take the route to Lyons.

The preparations of a young man are soon finished. Those of M. Ménard consumed a little more time. As a prudent man, he did not get into the carriage without having put a Lesage pie in his trunk and a little bottle of Madeira in his pocket.

At last everything was ready. Frederic was delighted to set forth, to leave Paris, and especially

Madame Dernange. The poor boy really believed that she would regret him, and that his departure would, perhaps, break her heart. When he has travelled awhile he will lose such fancies.

But the carriage was waiting, the postilion was in the saddle. Frederic pressed his father's hand to his heart. M. Ménard saluted the Count six times and then got into the carriage backwards in order to have the honor of saluting him once more. Frederic threw himself back upon the cushions, the postilion cracked the whip, and they were en route for Italy.

CHAPTER IV

A NEW WAY OF MAKING ACQUAINTANCES. THE BARON POTOSKI

FOR some little time the carriage had rolled along; the conversation, however, had languished between the two travellers; first of all, M. Ménard had expressed to Frederic the extreme satisfaction he experienced at being again in his company, and the latter had thanked the tutor for his kind expressions; then they had admired several points in the landscape, and commented upon them; after which the young man's memory reverted to Madame Dernange and several other unfaithful fair ones, and he had, in consequence, become dreamy and relapsed into silence. Presently M. Ménard addressed himself to a pie with which he had taken care to provide himself, and held a lively intercourse with it, which he only interrupted to say a few friendly words to the little bottle of Madeira.

"I believe we are having a most delightful journey," remarked Frederic, rousing himself from his reflections.

M. Ménard hastened to swallow the morsel of pie he was masticating, and replied, smiling,—

"I believe it also, Count, we have everything we need here. Would you not like to taste this pie, my dear Count, it is perfect."

"Thank you, my dear Ménard, I am not yet hungry. But pray, do not let us have so much ceremony between us, do not call me Count, but, as of old, call me Frederic, that will be much better."

"Very well, Count, but in travelling, at the hotels, for instance," pleaded M. Ménard, "it is just as well that they should be aware that they have the honor of serving —"

"Yes, no doubt, and in that way we shall pay four times as much as is necessary for everything," said the young man, "I repeat that I desire to avoid all ceremony; it adds nothing to the pleasure of the journey."

"You will, at least," said the old tutor, "permit me to call you M. de Montreville, for the Count, your father, might object if he thought his son was travelling incognito."

"By the way, how much money did he give you?"

"Eight thousand francs, monsieur," rejoined M. Ménard.

"Eight thousand francs! That is not too much."

"Ah, Monsieur de Montreville, it is surely enough for two men, especially when they have horses and carriages of their own. We shall not go to the end of the world. Besides, you know

that the Count, your father, told us that in case of urgent need we could ask him for more."

"Yes, and, besides, we are not going to spend money foolishly."

"And then in travelling it would be imprudent to carry too large a sum. We are going to Italy, and that country is infested with brigands. Between Rome and Naples especially, they say the road is extremely dangerous. When we arrive there it will be necessary to take every precaution."

Frederic made no answer; he was thinking at the moment of Dubourg, and was surprised that he had received no news of him. The travellers had already attained a distance of nine leagues from Paris, on a very good road, where it would have been difficult to have foreseen an accident.

Suddenly the loud snapping of a postilion's whip announced that they were followed by other travellers. Frederic looked back and perceived behind them a small carriage which was coming along very swiftly. Soon the increasing noise indicated that the carriage was overtaking them and would soon pass them. A cloud of dust enveloped the travellers, but the road was so wide that there was no need of their turning on one side. However, just as they expected the carriage would pass, it struck their vehicle so forcibly that the post-chaise was overturned near a ditch, and M. Ménard, who had been thrown out of the chaise by the shock, rolled into it, shouting loudly.


The coach stopped. The postilion of the chaise began to swear at the coach's postilion, calling him imbecile, fool, drunkard, because he had run into him on a road broad enough for three carriages to pass with ease. The other driver made no response, but contented himself with laughing, which angered the postilion still more.

Frederic was unharmed, and hurried to M. Ménard to discover the state of his injuries. The tutor was evidently more frightened than hurt. He felt of himself all over, readjusted his perruque, and declared that the fall would certainly upset his digestion.

Meanwhile the driver of the coach had dismounted. He talked for a moment with the person in his charge, and then advanced, hat in hand, towards the travellers, who were still in the ditch, and begged pardon for his awkwardness. He said that the Baron Ladislas Potoski, palatine of Rava and Sandomir, asked permission to come and inquire after their state, and offer any assistance in his power.

When he heard the postilion recite the name and title of the traveller he conducted, M. Ménard hastened to rise from the ditch, to straighten his waistcoat and pull out his shirt frills, which his fall had somewhat disarranged.

"Tell your master that we appreciate his kindness," replied Frederic; "but it is unnecessary to disturb him. I hope that there is no serious harm done."



"But our carriage is a little damaged," said M. Ménard; "and we might accept the offer of M. le Palatine Pota—Poto—Potiouski, until we reach the next village."

The tutor had not finished speaking when the so-called Polish nobleman sprang from his carriage and advanced toward them. He had his hand on his hip and swaggered in great style. Frederic raised his eyes and recognized Dubourg. He almost burst with laughter, but Dubourg made him a warning sign and ran toward him, exclaiming,—

"I am not mistaken! Happy accident! This is M. Frederic de Montreville!"

Dubourg threw himself into Frederic's arms, and Frederic, pretending great surprise also, cried out,—

"Really, really, it is Monsieur de—Monsieur du—"

"The Baron Potoski," whispered Dubourg, under his breath.

"It is his excellency, the Baron Potoski!"

While the recognition was taking place they were standing on the edge of the ditch, and M. Ménard kept bowing, and pulling at Frederic's coat, to remind him that they should go back to the road, which seemed to him a much more decent place for an introduction to the great Polish seigneur.

Dubourg turned presently toward Ménard, and addressed himself to Frederic.

"Have I the honor to meet the Count,



your father?" he asked, smiling upon the preceptor with a graciousness and nobility beyond description.

"No," replied Frederic, "but he has been a second father to me. Allow me to present M. Ménard, my former tutor."

"M. Ménard!" exclaimed Dubourg, turning to him a face full of admiration, and gazing at him as people once gazed at Voltaire. "Is it really M. Ménard? Bless me! I have often heard you spoken of—always as the *primus inter pares* of tutors! How charmed I am to make your acquaintance! Tandem felix, Monsieur Ménard, since I see you."

M. Ménard no longer knew what he was doing. This deluge of praise and courtesy on the part of the palatine of Rava and Sandomir transported and overcame him to such a degree that he was dizzy from bowing, and would have rolled into the ditch again if Frederic had not stopped him in time.

Dubourg put an end to the poor man's embarrassment by taking his hand, which he pressed with unmistakable force.

"How much honor you do me, monsieur!" stammered the tutor at last; then, turning to Frederic, he said, "Then you have met the Seigneur Potoski before?"

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed Frederic, smiling; "we are intimate friends, this dear Dubourg!"

"What! Dubourg?" said Ménard in surprise.

"Oh, yes!" cried the pretended baron eagerly. "That is the name by which I was known in Paris, where I was obliged to preserve a severe incognito, as I was charged by my government with very secret and delicate missions."

"I understand! I understand!" said Ménard.

"My dear Frederic," added the Baron, "call me Dubourg still; it was under that name that I first knew you, and it will be ever dear to me."

M. Ménard went to examine the overturned carriage, and Frederic took the opportunity to say to Dubourg, "Are you aware that the means you took to rejoin me were a little violent? You came near killing me and this poor Ménard."

"That was the fault of the imbecile postilion. I told him to tip me out as soon as we were near you, but the rascal preferred to overturn you. That annoys me so much the more because I expected to go on in your carriage, and instead of that I must offer you mine, which is not at all the same thing. Never mind; let me arrange it. I see that it is very easy to impose upon this poor Ménard; but be ready to second me, and support what I say whenever it is necessary, and above all things do not forget that I am the Baron Potoski, palatine of Rava and Sandomir. You very nearly spoiled it all by calling me Dubourg. Happily, I have set that right; but if you are guilty of such awkwardness again I may be obliged to travel alone, and I assure you that I would not go very far."

Ménard returned to say that there was a broken axletree in the post-chaise, and that they would not be able to go on until the following morning.

"Well, gentlemen," said Dubourg, "you must do me the favor to accept my coach. We can stop for the night in the nearest village, and meanwhile the wheelwright of the neighborhood will repair your carriage."

This arrangement being adopted, the postilion was directed to lead the chaise along at a slow pace, and all three travellers mounted into the Polish baron's coach. It was an old and shabby carriage, of which the interior was soiled and patched in different places, testifying to its long use; and the bad condition of the springs kept the travellers jumping about like rubber balls.

Frederic could not repress a smile on entering the palatine's chariot, but Dubourg lost no time in creating the right impression. He addressed M. Ménard, who modestly seated himself in front, but could not avoid some furtive glances about him.

"You see," he said, "a carriage which is much older than we. It belonged to my ancestor. Stanislas Leczinski fled in this very carriage pursued by his competitor Augustus, who was protected by the Czar, while Charles the Twelfth supported Stanislas. But you know all that better than I, Monsieur Ménard, for you are a learned man."

"Ah, Baron!"

“To return to this carriage: All my relatives revere it as I do. It is truly a family carriage. When my father left Cracovia in a time of trouble, this modest coach contained six millions, partly in gold and partly in jewels. It was the remnant of his fortune, with which he wished to retire to Brittany, where you eat such excellent butter and delicious products of the dairy.”

At the mention of six millions Frederic had been obliged to bite his lips, and here he began to cough violently to conceal his desire to laugh. But M. Ménard examined the old carriage with an air of great respect.

“You can understand, Monsieur Ménard,” continued Dubourg, wiping his face with a silk handkerchief, which he had stuck in the pocket of his waistcoat, to give himself a foreign air — “you can understand how one clings to a carriage which recalls such honorable memories. I know that it is not modern, and that it could be better hung. Twenty times my steward has wished to have it repainted, and to put a new lining in it; but I have always refused. This place where I sit was occupied by King Stanislas, yours by a Hungarian princess, and I declare to you, Monsieur Ménard, that I cannot change this Utrecht velvet, when it has had the honor of supporting such illustrious personages.”

“I share your sentiments entirely in this regard, your excellency,” said Ménard. He was enrapt-

ured at the idea of travelling with two gentlemen of such distinguished rank, and the joy of knowing that he sat in a spot once occupied by a princess of Hungary was almost more than he could bear.

"This carriage must be very dear to you," he murmured; "and I assure your excellency that it is perfectly comfortable, and that I find it very easy —"

At this moment a sudden jolt threw M. Ménard upon his pupil's knees; but he continued, clinging to the curtain, "*Ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis offender maculis*," and Dubourg answered him with "*Vitam impendere vero*."

Frederic coughed a little harder as he looked through the window, and M. Ménard bowed low while he said, "Your excellency, I have never doubted it."

"Forced to travel incognito," continued Dubourg, "I have not brought any members of my suite, and I assure you I do not find it so bad; for I detest the formality, the etiquette, all the state which accompanies a high position. In travelling I have dispensed with all that. I am a man of nature, and I live as a simple observer. But, by the way, my dear Frederic, I have not yet asked you where you are going. Is it an indiscreet question?"

"Well, really, my dear friend, I am leaving Paris because I have found there only coquettish or hard-hearted women, who do not understand my manner of loving."

"Yes, my dear; and that is because your notion of loving is not the fashionable one. I see you have had a little disappointment. You were always a trifle romantic, just a little bit sentimental. We must cure Frederic of this folly, must we not, M. Ménard?"

"Baron, that is not in my power; and besides, we must not be too hard on him. You know what Seneca has said,—*'Non est magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiæ.'*"

"It is very true," replied Dubourg; "the greatest men have their weaknesses. Alexander drank too much; Antony dressed himself as Bacchus to please Cleopatra; Æneas consulted the Cumæan sibyl; the Emperor Maximilian died from eating too much melon. Then it is not surprising that Frederic has too impressible a heart."

M. Ménard bowed low before the Baron, who had just given him this fragment of his learning, which increased immensely the respect he already felt for him.

"I have not yet decided where to go," remarked Frederic. "I wish to see those countries which recall interesting facts or have given birth to celebrated men. We love to touch the earth where a genius was born which has survived so many generations. In all that surrounds us then, we seem to recreate the great man who has made his native place illustrious by his writing, his military achievements or his virtue. So, dear friend, we think of beginning our journey in Italy."

"What! is it possible? Like you, I have planned to run about the world and add something to my little store of knowledge. How charming it would be if we could go together!"

"Gladly, dear Baron. That will give me great pleasure, I assure you."

"Ah, thanks! I am grateful for the chance which brought us together. What a pleasure it will be to travel with my intimate friend, the Count de Montreville, and the learned M. Ménard; to mingle our reflections upon the places which we visit; and to receive the enlightenment which must come from the remarks, friendship and knowledge of so distinguished a professor!"

Ménard bowed confusedly and began to express his thanks; but Dubourg went on warmly, without leaving him time to reply: "What a joy it will be to see ancient Rome with you, and that superb Genoa; to climb with M. Ménard the summit of Vesuvius, and descend into the crater, if there is no danger! What a pleasure it will be to visit with a friend the tomb of Virgil and the Grotto of the Dog, and to stand with a learned man on the Tarpeian rock! What delights await us in Switzerland, the country of William Tell, cradle of liberty, where the customs of the people have retained their simplicity in spite of the storms of revolution! There we shall meet everywhere the most touching hospitality, and eat cheese, M. Ménard—ah, such cheese! I will not guarantee, however,

that it equals that of Brittany ; for there is nothing better than what they eat in Brittany. Ah, that is a beautiful country, with its woods and fields, its fine pastures. They have very fine cows there, M. Ménard."

Frederic nudged Dubourg as a warning to drop Brittany, for his natural sentiment always led him back to this subject. He hastened to repair his fault. "In Switzerland it is not rare to eat a cheese fifteen or twenty years old. These good people have the art of keeping it an indefinite length of time."

"That should be even better than our Roquefort," responded M. Ménard, who felt himself upon his own ground when they spoke of eating.

"Oh, I guarantee it; by the side of these old Swiss affairs, our Roquefort is only Neufchâtel. Indeed, Monsieur Ménard, if you travel with me, I hope you will eat cheese more than once."

"Ah, your excellency!"

"We will visit the glaciers; we will ascend Saint Gothard and the Righi, where they say you must crawl on all fours. What superb views we shall gaze upon! We will cross the Grisons country and there we will botanize. M. Ménard will collect specimens. We will watch the young Swiss girls gleaning—they wear very short petticoats. Ah, we shall see some pretty things!"

"Well, my dear master, what do you think of our plans?" said Frederic to his old tutor.

M. Ménard was delighted; to travel with a man so noble, so learned, so amiable as the Baron Potoski seemed to him a great happiness; and although the hard cushions and the jolting of the carriage had already given him some bruises, his courage would have carried him a thousand leagues in a coach which had borne King Stanislas, and in the seat a princess of Hungary had occupied.

"Certainly," he said; "I see no objection to our travelling with Monsieur le Baron, and by the first post I will write to your father, the Count, and tell him of our happy encounter. He could not but approve it."

"No, no!" cried Dubourg; "you must not write a word to the Count. I have told you I travel incognito; I do not wish anyone to know in which direction I turn my steps. My government wishes to appoint me ambassador to the Porte, but I do not care for that dignity. The Count might speak of me inadvertently, and immediately all France would know where I had gone. It would be better to say nothing."

"I am of the same opinion," said Frederic. "Of what use is it to tell all this to my father? He has given me entire liberty to go where it seems good to me, and has asked M. Ménard to accompany me, not as a guardian, but as a friend. Surely, in travelling with the Baron I could only give my father extreme pleasure. But in his joy at having me in such company, he would un-

doubtedly speak of you. Your incognito would be betrayed, and you would be forced to leave us."

"In short," said Ménard, "I comprehend that—in short, if—"

Dubourg saw that the tutor still had some scruples, and he hastened to draw from his pocket his shell tobacco box, which he presented to Frederic, glancing at it significantly.

"Do you recognize it, dear Frederic? It is the one you saw in Paris."

"Oh, yes; I recognize it," replied Frederic, although he had no idea what Dubourg meant; while M. Ménard glanced at the snuff box and waited impatiently for the Baron to explain.

"Ah, that is very precious to me!" exclaimed Dubourg, enjoying a pinch of snuff. "You have no idea, M. Ménard, to whom this box belonged?"

"No, indeed, Baron."

"Simple as it is, I would not exchange it for a box of gold. It was the snuff box of the King of Prussia, M. Ménard."

"Of the King of Prussia?"

"Yes, monsieur, of the great Frederick, who, as you know, was a decided lover of tobacco. He carried it often loose in his pocket; but this did not prevent his having some very simple tobacco boxes, and this is one of them. He gave it to my father and I have it from him."

“Ah, your excellency, if I dared to ask the favor —”

Ménard held out two of his fingers very respectfully, to take some snuff from the box of the King of Prussia, which Dubourg presented to him smiling.

Ménard took a pinch with all the humility imaginable. He filled his nose with the snuff, which he found delicious; and the poor man believed that when he sneezed he had a slight resemblance to the King of Prussia. He lost his head in the vapor of grandeur, which mingled with the odor of tobacco. At the third sneeze he bowed again to the Baron Potoski, and cried out, “Decidedly it will be useless to write to the Count.”

CHAPTER V

A VILLAGE INN. WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR TRAVELLERS

NIGHT was coming on apace when our travellers reached a mean little village. Dubourg had ordered his postilion to put them down at the best inn, but as there was only one in the vicinity they were compelled to alight there, and to resolve to content themselves with the very indifferent accommodations it was likely to afford them.

Frederic was very much opposed to the idea of sleeping in this wretched village, but Dubourg insisted that they should pass the night there. He had his own reasons for avoiding a longer journey in his carriage, and wished to dispense with it at this point; and as M. Ménard was beginning to feel exceedingly in need of refreshment, and as the broken remains of his pie had remained in the disabled post-chaise, he warmly seconded Dubourg's proposition.

This inn was one of those humble houses of entertainment which are rarely frequented by persons of means travelling in carriages, but which are chiefly frequented by humble foot passengers.

The coach entered a roomy court, filled with manure and mud. A dozen ducks paddled in a pond and appeared to dispute its possession with the geese that paraded majestically about, while three pigs grunted and rummaged the corners of this rustic domain. A crippled old horse refreshed himself from a trough, on the edges of which some fowls had perched; and these laid their eggs indifferently in the entrance hall of the inn, in the street, or in the court, feeling probably that there was little difference in the three places. To complete the picture, some rabbits ran back and forth under the hedge of a garden, where they had their warren. From time to time they showed their heads, but were frightened back by the baying of a great dog, which considered itself responsible for the conduct of all the other animals.

The coach passed with some difficulty under an old carriage entrance, which had not been closed for some time. On one side the wheel ran into a rut; on the other, it passed over a heap of manure, and this filled M. Ménard with fear lest the noble coach of the palatine of Rava should tip over, and he should fall with it. But it was only a fright. As the carriage entered the court, the pigs and the rabbits scattered, the ducks squawked, the fowls and geese fled, and the dog rushed barking in the faces of the travellers. A dozen country fellows and as many peasant women — almost the entire village, in

fact — gathered about the entrance to see the travellers get out of the carriage.

"Where the devil are they taking us?" cried Frederic, putting his head out of the window, but withdrawing it again immediately, for the wheel had stirred up the filth in the place and the odor was not exactly attractive.

"I hope we are not near the kitchen," remarked M. Ménard, holding his nose.

"Don't be alarmed, gentlemen," said Dubourg, "we shall do very well here. You know it is not always well to judge from appearances. I have stopped at this inn before, and I remember that I have eaten excellent rabbit stew and omelets here."

While it might seem strange that a palatine should be pleased with such common dishes, the remark made the court less repulsive to M. Ménard, and alighting from the carriage after Dubourg, who had jumped out on the pile of manure, he looked all about for the kitchen.

The master of the inn now appeared, with his cap over his left ear, but he did not greet the travellers; for being accustomed to receive only waggoners or peasants, who pay little attention to small courtesies, he had acquired a certain familiarity with all strangers, and the sight of a carriage awoke in him no accession of respect, for the reason that his house was not supported by travellers of this kind.

This innkeeper was a little man of fifty years who limped slightly, and whose blooming nose suggested frequent potations of a beverage stronger than water.

"Will you have something to drink, gentlemen?" he said, addressing Ménard, who, with nose in the air, was endeavoring to catch the odor of a rabbit stew. He thought the innkeeper's tone impertinent.

"Come on, my good fellow," said Dubourg; "give us your best room. We want to eat and sleep here. Stir things up as soon as possible; turn the spits and kindle the fires; we are in a great hurry."

"Yes," said Ménard, tapping the innkeeper's shoulder, with a patronizing air, "and pay attention, my friend. You have the honor of receiving the honorable Count Frederic of Montreville and his excellency, Baron Ladislas Potoski, palatine of Rava and Sandomir, and Monsieur Benoît Ménard, a distinguished master and bachelor of arts."

"I have no room for all those great people," said the innkeeper; while Dubourg approached Ménard, reproved him for having betrayed his incognito, and begged him to be more circumspect in the future.

"Hello! Goton! Goton!" cried the landlord, turning toward the garden. "Come and take care of these travellers, while I look after the horses, and tell my wife to see what she can get for supper."

Mademoiselle Goton appeared. She was a tall, strong girl of twenty years, dark, with black eyes, and a skin browned by the sun. Her features were not regular. Her nose was slightly retroussé and her mouth rather large, but she had beautiful teeth and altogether a piquante and attractive face. If, instead of a short skirt of homespun, a cloth cap and a waist of coarse blue woollen, Goton had worn a dress which did justice to her figure; if her skin had been treated with almond paste and her hair had been carefully dressed, no doubt Mademoiselle Goton would have made many conquests in Paris.

"Will you follow me, gentlemen?" said the servant, smiling. Mademoiselle smiled often, for it was very becoming; and a woman always knows how to look her best, whether in the village or in the city. If a mirror is lacking, a pond or a fountain will do as well.

Dubourg in an instant saw what the servant was worth, and as he followed her he said to himself, "I will try and get plenty of supper, and that will amuse Ménard. I shall have my fun with Mademoiselle Goton. If I could only find a sentimental person for Frederic—well, at least I can talk to him of Madame Dernange, and of all his Paris love affairs. That will give us material enough for one evening."

The best room in the inn was that where usually the carters, farmers and peasants dined. Four

travelling pedlers had arrived an hour before the illustrious strangers, and were seated at a table, drinking, and talking about their business.

The arrival of the three newcomers did not disturb the four men in the least. They looked at the gentlemen and continued to drink.

"I'll set your table here," said Goton, approaching a table covered with oilcloth.

"No, no," said Dubourg; "we cannot sup here. You must serve us in one of your sleeping-rooms."

"But this is the dining-room."

"That may be," said M. Ménard; "but the Count and the Baron. No, indeed; we will not eat here."

These words attracted the attention of the pedlers, who eyed the travellers rather sneeringly. M. Ménard, fearing that he had offended them and dreading a scene, took refuge in the hall, where he waited for the maid; while Dubourg, who was not patient, eyed the four drinkers one after the other. As for Frederic, his mind was filled with a thousand memories, and he paid little attention to what went on around him.

"I suppose you see, Goton," said one of the pedlers, smiling scornfully, "these gentlemen are too fine to eat near us. By the Lord! You had better be careful not to look too close at them or they will be offended."

"Nobody spoke to you!" exclaimed Dubourg. "Don't be insolent or you'll be sorry for it."

"Oh, there's a fellow who has plenty of cheek!"

"Please, Baron," said Ménard, putting the end of his nose inside the door; "don't let that go any further. These gentlemen had no intention of —"

"Say, it's a baron," said the second pedler; "and I took him for a Swiss herb doctor, with his silk handkerchief flying."

"Have you seen their carriage?" asked a third. "It's an old carryall that I wouldn't harness my donkey to!"

"The wretches! to speak so of King Stanislas' coach!" said Ménard, but he muttered these words so low that no one dreamed he had spoken.

"I tell you," said Dubourg, "shut up, or you'll find out whom you are dealing with!"

"Really!" cried the countrymen, brandishing their cudgels. "We will show you a thing or two!"

Up to this time Frederic had kept silence. He now drew a pair of pistols from his pocket, and advanced to the table where the four drinkers were seated. "Gentlemen," he said in a calm tone, "whatever title we bear, we are men, and we wish to prove it. We are not accustomed to using sticks, but here is something that makes us all equal. Everybody knows how to fire a pistol. Choose! Which of you will fight with me?"

"Yes," cried Dubourg, in his turn, drawing two pistols of heavier calibre from his pocket, "and now who will be the next?"

At sight of the pistols the pedlers turned pale

and dropped their cudgels. Men who abuse their power to outrage those whom they consider more helpless than themselves usually appear very weak and cowardly before such arguments as these.

Goton shrieked aloud at sight of the firearms. The landlord ran limping in. M. Ménard rushed to the end of the hall, where it was too dark to see, and he collided with the landlady, who was hurrying along to discover the cause of the trouble in the dining-room.

The landlady, whose acquaintance we have not yet made, was a little woman of about fifty, almost as broad as she was tall. For some time she had been growing so stout that she could hardly waddle from the bar to the kitchen, and it looked as if she would not be able to walk at all before long.

The effort which she was obliged to put forth to move her immense body made the landlady's life a very sedentary one. She passed almost all of her time in an arm-chair, which a carpenter of the neighborhood had constructed, of sufficient size to comfortably lodge the enormous surface of her centre of gravity. Such a manner of living, far from diminishing her embonpoint, contributed to its rapid and daily increase. This was especially disquieting, as the innkeeper, with his limp, was even now nearly five minutes in making the tour of his wife.

The landlady had heard the cries of Goton and the exclamations of her husband, and, knowing

that something extraordinary must be going on, she left her large arm-chair and passed along the corridor which led to the dining-room. As this corridor was narrow, the landlady rubbed against the two sides which formed the passage and corked it hermetically. It would, therefore, have been impossible for anyone to traverse it at the same time as the landlady, except by jumping over her head or trying to pass between her legs.

It was against this enormous mass that M. Ménard had thrown himself. The sight of the pistols had restored to his limbs the vigor of twenty years, and he thought of nothing but flight from the field of combat. In spite of the impact with which the tutor struck the landlady, she was not shaken. Firm as a rock and, moreover, sustained by the two sides of the corridor, the fat woman could do nothing but cry in a thin falsetto voice, "What's that? Who goes there?"

Stunned by the blow he had received, Ménard was conscious of nothing except that he must get through; and he returned to the object he had struck, hoping to find a passage on one side or the other. He tried the right, and buried his nose in a neck whose fatness outdid that of the Hottentot Venus. He recoiled, and tried the left, and jammed against an arm big enough to stop a window.

"O, my God! where am I?" cried Ménard, who had no idea what was the obstacle before

him. He dreamed only of escape, and, thrusting his head forward like a ram, tried to force his way through, while the landlady shrieked with increasing terror, "What is it? What does he want? Where does he want to go?"

The cries of the landlady attracted the attention of the travellers, for peace was established in the dining-room as soon as Frederic and Dubourg showed their pistols. The four pedlers became courteous and murmured their excuses, and the young men accepted them, not wishing to be embroiled with such company. Everybody's attention was now turned to the corridor.

"It is my wife's voice!" said the landlord. "Something very exciting must have occurred to make her move from her chair."

The landlord hastened towards the corridor with Goton, who carried a light, Dubourg and Frederic following them. They reached the landlady just in time, their steps having been quickened by her shrieks. The noise of the hurrying footsteps increased the terror of Ménard, who determined to force a passage through the obstacle before him; and as he could penetrate neither to the right nor left, he got upon all fours like a child and endeavored to crawl between the legs of the fat woman. The landlady did not know her assailant, and believed him to be a thief. She, therefore, decided that he should not escape, and knowing no other way of stopping him, sat down

upon him, and there she sat astride of Ménard when the whole company rushed into the hall with lights.

Goton burst into fits of laughter. The landlord stood still in amazement, and Frederic and Dubourg sought in vain to comprehend the meaning of this strange tableau.

"I can't stand any more!" cried Ménard, in a suffocated voice.

"I've got him! He's taken!" exclaimed the landlady in triumph.

The poor man was so effectually taken that he would have been suffocated if they had not pulled him out immediately. The landlord was very jealous of his chaste half, and he regarded her as the most beautiful woman to be found within the circumference of a hundred leagues; so he stooped quickly and hauled M. Ménard from his inglorious position.

"You rogue! Great Heavens! Comrade! What are you doing down there? Thousand eyes!"

"Oh, I assure you, little wolf, it's all right. He just wanted to get through," said the landlady, with honeyed words hastening to calm the suspicions of her husband. Ménard was now restored to the air, and began to recover from his fright, although his wig was still upside down and his face quite convulsed.

"But, ducks and drakes! Friend! What were you after there?" cried the landlord, still mystified.

Ménard looked about him with a bewildered air; he was not yet quite himself. Dubourg satisfied everyone. He suspected why M. Ménard tried to run away. He relieved the landlord's doubts, reassured the landlady about the quarrel which had taken place in the dining-room, and ordered Goton to conduct them to their apartments. She did so after the landlady had uncorked the passageway by returning to her chair.

The best suite which could be given to our travellers consisted of two very dirty chambers, embellished by beams which crossed the ceiling, where cats and spiders were domiciled with the occupants of the apartments. In each room was a very poor bed. Blue-and-white curtains, with a design something like a rustic salad bowl, half surrounded each of the beds, which were fully five feet high.

"The apartment is certainly modest," said Fred-eric, smiling; "but war is war, and when we travel we must put the best face on everything. Is that not true, my dear Ménard?"

"No doubt," replied the gentleman addressed. "A night is soon passed, and these beds seem tolerably good."

"We'll need a ladder to get into them, though."

"But I see only two, Count."

"Oh, don't bother about me," said Dubourg.

"I won't go to bed; I shall write. I have some

despatches to send away. I shall throw myself into an arm-chair to finish the night."

"But I don't see one, Baron."

"Never mind; a chair, a bench,—anything. When you have been used to sleeping in a bivouac, you are not very particular. But the supper is late; I will go and have a look at the kitchen."

Dubourg went out, and Frederic placed himself at the window which looked out on the country. The moon lighted up a part of the village, where the most profound calm reigned. The young man compared the life of Paris to that of the inhabitants of this hamlet. He reflected that at the very moment when the simple villagers gave themselves to repose the city people started for the play, or assembled in various places to display their finery and seek pleasure. But did he need to leave the city for contrasts? In one house, on the first floor there may be dancing; on the second, they weep over the death of a husband or father; on the third, perhaps a young man is telling his love for the first time; on the fourth, a drunken fellow beats his wife; on the fifth, a gambler prepares to go out, filling his pockets with gold; and under the roof, a young girl works all night to get bread for her mother.

While Frederic was lost in his reflections, M. Ménard examined the beds and discovered to his sorrow that the bed which he thought would be



so soft was made of a straw mattress four feet thick and a very thin, poor pad.

"These villagers are crazy, with their great straw mattress!" said Ménard, turning over the covers, which scraped his hand. "I thought I was going to sink into feathers. Bah! But these are miserable sheets! And the Baron said this was a good place! I shall go to bed with my drawers on. I hope the supper will make up for the other shortcomings."

Dubourg had gone to speak to the postilion of his coach. He settled his account with him, and ordered him to be gone before morning. Dubourg had only three louis left of the ten which Frédéric had given him, and he naturally did not care to retain a carriage for which he could not pay. When this matter was settled, Dubourg lay in wait for Mademoiselle Goton, to whom he wished to say two words. The servant looked upon Dubourg with a favorable eye, because of his brave encounter with the pedlers. She was delighted with him; for courage is a good trait, and pleases buxom maids as well as fine ladies. Goton was helping her master in the kitchen. She was also serving the four men, who seemed inclined to spend the night in drinking at the inn, and start upon their journey at dawn.

The pedlers laughed and jested with the girl, who had enough to do to defend herself from them, as they were inclined to be too familiar.

But Goton was accustomed to doing battle with rough fellows of this description. She gave one a box on the ear, another a kick; she pinched, she scratched, and the clowns found her doubly attractive.

Goton was thus busy on every side, but she found time to whisper two words of hope to Dubourg. At dawn the pedlers would be gone, her employer asleep, and she would be free. This hint enchanted our traveller. He caught Goton at the foot of the staircase and gave her a sounding kiss. The girl fled; but when Dubourg lifted his eyes he saw Ménard, who, candle in hand, had come to see if there was any chance of supper, and stood petrified when he discovered the palatine of Rava holding in his arms the stout dish-washer.

Dubourg was never disconcerted, so he glanced up at Ménard and said, "The Emperor Helio-gabalus never failed to reward the inventor of a new dish, so I embraced the person who comes to announce that supper is served."

Nothing could have pleased Ménard better. He returned with Dubourg to Frederic, and Goton came to set the table in the first chamber.

"Let us sit down and be gay!" cried Dubourg, who felt more at ease now that he knew he was relieved of his carriage. Ménard responded to this invitation with a gracious smile, and Frederic decided to leave the moon a moment and devote himself to worldly questions.

"Let us first taste the wine," said Dubourg. "Is it the best you have, my dear?"

"Yes, monsieur, it is the best; we have no more of that sort."

"It is a little sour," declared Ménard, screwing up his face.

"Well, we have some white wine which is sweeter," said Goton.

"Go and bring us the white, my dear. Go — hurry up! You don't have such gentlemen for supper every day."

"No, indeed," remarked Ménard. "Let us hope the landlord remembered that when he cooked these rabbits."

Dubourg served the rabbits, but the landlord had been troubled by his wife's adventure in the corridor, and had allowed his ragout to burn. Goton was busy with the four pedlers, so she put the onions in too late, and forgot to scrape the bacon.

Dubourg insisted in vain that it had a delicious flavor. Ménard said nothing because he did not dare to contradict the Baron, but at each mouthful his face darkened.

"What a devil of a ragout that is!" cried Frederic, pushing away the plate which Dubourg offered him repeatedly. "I should think those rabbits had lived on cabbage, raw onions and rancid bacon; and besides, it has a burnt taste that is detestable."

"It certainly does not correspond with what the Baron promised," said Ménard.

"What is to be done, gentlemen?" replied Dubourg. "A cook sometimes makes mistakes. Errare humanum est. Isn't that true, Monsieur Ménard?"

"Your excellency, a cook should never errare."

"After all, it is your fault. You upset him. Why couldn't you let his wife alone?"

"I only wanted to pass, Baron."

"You took a queer road."

"Your excellency, my intentions were pure."

"I have never doubted that, but your position was certainly questionable."

Goton put an end to this conversation by entering with an omelette and the white wine.

"Did you gentlemen like the ragout?" she asked.

"It is not fit for the devil!" cried Frederic.

"It is altogether bad," added M. Ménard.

"My dear," said Dubourg, "the rabbits of Brittany do not taste so strong of cabbage; you find excellent ones there; but here you follow a bad method in raising them."

"It seems that your excellency has lived a long time in Brittany," remarked Ménard, extending his fingers to take a pinch from the snuffbox of the King of Prussia, which Dubourg had handed to him.

"Yes, Monsieur Ménard; and I confess that I

have a weakness for that country. I have very sweet memories of it. Ah, what a blue sky they have in Brittany! And its landscapes,—how lovely they are! What pastures and what enchanting woods you find there! You go several miles from the city without leaving the shady trees, the bowers and flowery pathways.”

“But what of Poland, Baron?”

“Ah, Poland has its merits also. Have you been there, M. Ménard?”

“I have not had that honor, your excellency.”

“Since you do not know it, I will often speak of it to you.”

“I should think it would be a strange country.”

“Very strange, picturesque and interesting. We have, especially, the Krapach Mountains. In comparison with them Mount Cenis is merely a hill.”

“Oh, is it possible! And are these mountains covered with snow?”

“Almost all the year. I have a castle at the top of one of these cliffs, and it is so steep that only a chamois could climb to its top.”

“And how do you reach your castle, Baron?”

“I have had a winding staircase constructed in the interior of the mountain. It cost me a hundred thousand francs; but it is a superb thing, and you can see it from a hundred leagues around. I certainly hope, M. Ménard, that I shall have the pleasure of showing you that, and that you

will pass some time with me in my château at Krapach. I shall offer you there a certain wine of Tokay which I obtained from the cave of Tékély, and I shall ask you for some interesting information about it."

"Ah, Baron, you overwhelm me. But is it not cold in your castle?"

"It was indeed very cold in the times of my ancestors; but, thanks to the new discoveries in lighting in this century, I have found the means of moderating the temperature. It is a very simple means, and one that accomplishes its object perfectly."

"Do tell us what it is, Baron."

"I have placed a gasometer under my château. Gas, as you know, gives much warmth to the earth. Wherever the pipes run under the ground, the heat is so great that I can grow green peas in January, out of doors. — But drink, dear Count; you are going to choke!"

Frederic indeed had much difficulty in attending quietly to the conversation which Dubourg carried on with perfect seriousness. M. Ménard listened to it all with the utmost interest and confidence, never doubting a single word of the Baron's utterances.

Just then the conversation was interrupted by a violent shock, from which the house trembled; and this shock was followed by an ominous cracking.

"Good Lord!" cried Ménard, "what is that? This house does not appear at all solid."

"Are they firing a cannon in the village to announce our arrival?" said Dubourg to Goton.

She laughed. "No, no; it is nothing," she assured them. "Madame is going to bed; that is all."

This explanation made the young people laugh, but Ménard was not at ease until he was certain that the landlady slept on the same floor as himself. He would not have consented to pass the night below a woman who shook the whole house when she turned over. It was bad enough to be under the same roof with her.

The white wine was a little better than the red, and it enabled them to eat an omelette with parsley, which Dubourg tried in vain to pass off for tarragon.

For dessert they could offer the travellers nothing but Gerome cheese; and indeed it was best that it should come to the table alone, for its odor was so strong that Frederic took flight, and went to bed in the farther room, giving Goton orders to call him at daylight. He did not wish to prolong his stay at the inn longer than was absolutely necessary.

M. Ménard believed that he ought to be agreeable to the Baron. Dubourg continued to pour him bumpers of wine and went into ecstasies over the flavor of the aniseed cheese. It recalled to him,

he said, that which he had eaten in Switzerland; and this assertion killed all the old tutor's desire to lunch or sup in a chalet.

"Yes, Monsieur Ménard," said Dubourg, "if you go to Gruyère, a little town of Switzerland renowned for its cheese,—and in fact this constitutes all the wealth of the people,—you will smell its odor a league away from the cottages in which it is made. If you sleep a night in one of the chalets, you smell cheese for eight days; and they say this is excellent for the lungs. But you must be in need of sleep, Monsieur Ménard. Don't let me detain you; go to bed. I shall pass the night in writing."

"Ah, your excellency, I should not dare to take the liberty before you."

"And why not? Diogenes went to bed in his barrel before Alexander, and Crates did not hesitate to show his back to his fellow-citizens."

"As you command, your excellency."

"I don't wish you to expose yourself to me, but I wish you to go to bed just as if I were not here."

Weariness and white wine combined to make Ménard very sleepy, and he did not wait for a second invitation. He therefore passed behind the flowered curtains and prepared himself for slumber. In the mean while, Dubourg seated himself in a corner of the room, before a table, and made a pretence of examining papers and taking notes. He waited with impatience until the tutor had

gone to sleep, so that he could give the postilion of his coach the signal for departure. He was afraid that Ménard might wake early, and it would then be very embarrassing if his coach were not a distance away from the village. It was for this reason that he hastened the departure of the postilion.

The gate of the court was not closed. Goton alone would be up to see what went on, and Dubourg knew the way to ensure her discretion.

It was nearly a quarter of an hour since Ménard had disappeared behind his curtains. Dubourg believed him asleep, and was about to go down stairs, when he heard a groan of distress from the side of the bed.

"Are you not well, Monsieur Ménard?" he asked; and, approaching the bed, he pushed the curtains lightly aside. But what was his surprise to find poor Ménard, in shirt and drawers and nightcap, standing beside the bed, and making vain efforts to climb into it by the aid of a low chair which did not elevate his short legs to the height of the mattress.

"What, Monsieur Ménard! Are you not yet in bed?"

"No, your excellency! For ten minutes I have been trying to climb into this bed. Is it not a horror? It is a mockery to travellers to give them beds which reach to the ceiling. Everybody is not six feet tall, and you would need to be a giant!"

"Never mind; don't be disturbed, Monsieur Ménard. Why did you not ask me to help you?"

"Ah, your excellency, I would not have dared to take such a liberty."

"You were wrong, for you know you can't spend the night trying to climb into bed."

Without waiting for his response, Dubourg helped Ménard to mount the chair; then he pushed vigorously, placing his hands upon that round part of his anatomy which the tutor had difficulty in lifting, and so was able to hoist him into his bed.

"*Sic itur ad astra*," said Dubourg.

"*Labor improbus omnia vincit*," replied Ménard, endeavoring to seize his bolster.

"Ouf!" cried Dubourg.

"I am there, your excellency!" exclaimed Ménard, delighted to be at last in bed.

"That's fortunate. Good-night, then!"

"A thousand thanks, your excellency!"

Dubourg left the bed and was careful to remove the chair which had been placed against it. By this means it was certain that Ménard would not leave his bed until Dubourg so wished. This precaution might put Ménard in a very unfortunate situation, as the result proved.

The tutor had not been in bed more than five minutes before he was snoring profoundly.

"Good! Now he is quiet," said Dubourg, and taking the light he descended softly into the court.

As he passed the dining-room he glanced in. Two of the pedlers were asleep upon the table, and the two others were still drinking ; but it looked very much as if they would soon be in the same state as their companions. Dubourg sought out his postilion, and, putting a hundred-sou piece in his hand, told him to set forth immediately. In a moment the horses were harnessed, and the coach of the noble palatine was a long way off from the inn and the village.

“ But how will you get away tomorrow ? ” asked Goton, who had come out to join Dubourg in the court, and stood looking after the receding carriage.

“ Oh, we have another carriage, a good post-chaise, which they have been mending. I will tell you what story I want you to repeat, as to what I have just done, Goton. Do you understand ? ”

As he said this Dubourg slipped two coins into the servant’s pocket. This was more than the poor girl often received for six months in this miserable inn, and the sight of the two round, glittering pieces made her as docile as a lamb.

“ Oh, that’s enough,” she said, while Dubourg threw his arms about her robust figure. “ I’ll say whatever you want ; do you see ? It was your coach, and you were the master. O good Lord ! you tickle me ! Don’t pinch so hard ! Oh, you’re foolish, now ! ”

“ Where is your chamber, Goton ? ”

"My chamber! Oh, I have no chamber! I sleep down there,—look,—in the little stable with the cow. I have only a thick straw tick on the ground for a bed, and no covers; for the mistress says in summer you don't need covers. But anyway, I am not cold, for Bebelle keeps me warm."

"And who is Bebelle, I should like to know?"

"Why, it's our cow! Didn't you know that? Oh, she is so gentle! Stop pinching; you pinch too hard!"

"Come, let's go to your room; we can talk better there. The stable will be a boudoir, Goton, with you in it."

"But what is a boudoir?"

"Come on and I'll teach you."

"But what about the pedlers?"

"They don't need you. Haven't they paid their bill?"

"Oh, yes; and anyway, my master knows them."

"Then it's useless for you to watch any longer."

"But if they should want anything?"

"Two of them are already sound asleep, and the other two are pretty nearly there. Come on, I tell you! It's nonsense to wait till daylight for them; and you need rest yourself, Goton."

The maid was half conquered. She no longer resisted Dubourg's reasoning, and allowed him to draw her toward the stable, which they both

entered, pulling the door close after them. It was merely fastened outside by an iron bar; but the servant slept there fearlessly, for she had no dread of thieves.

In the mean time one of the travelling pedlers was not asleep. He was thinking of Goton also, and he waited until his companions were deep in slumber, to try and find the pretty maid. This man had noticed that one of the strangers was interested in Mademoiselle Goton, and that had put him in a bad humor; but he did not dare to keep too close a watch, because the memory of the pistols made him respectful.

When his three companions had each sunk over the table with his head in his hands, he rose softly and prepared to look for Goton, with whose sleeping apartment he was familiar. He did not take a light, for he did not wish to betray his quest, and advanced at a wolf's pace to the stable.

He was not ten steps from the building, and he already heard two voices saying very pretty things to each other. He approached still nearer, and easily seized the thread of the discourse; for Dubourg and Goton believed themselves surrounded by animals, and gave themselves up without reserve to the pleasures of conversation.

The pedler was furious, but how should he revenge himself? He did not care to pick a quarrel with Dubourg. It would be a waste of time to call the landlord. The dear man and his wife shut

themselves up, and barricaded themselves, so as not to be disturbed. Then, after all, what did they care as to how their servant spent her nights? It was probable they did not hold themselves responsible for Goton's habits.

The pedler decided to play a trick on the two lovers. He thought of nothing better than to drop the iron bar very softly, which fastened the door of the stable from the outside. Then he went away, delighted, saying to himself, —

“You will not get out of there till someone comes to deliver you; for the door is solid, and I defy you to break it.”

Our man went to rejoin his companions. Soon the day began to dawn. It was the hour when their business compelled the pedlers to begin their journey. They were soon on foot, and as they gathered up their bundles they listened to the story of the trick their companion had played the stranger. All applauded, delighted to be avenged upon a man who was not afraid of their cudgels, and left the inn, smiling at the scene which would take place there in the morning.

While these events were passing, Ménard did not continue to rest so tranquilly as in the beginning. The white wine, of which the Baron had poured him such frequent potations, had produced its effect. Ménard awakened. He turned; he stretched his arm outside his bed to find the chair, which would aid him to descend. In these

wretched inns there was no such thing as a bedside table, and he felt that he must get up.

But it was in vain that he extended his arm and felt on all sides. There was no chair! How could he get out of a bed which almost touched the ceiling? He listened. He heard nothing. He pushed aside the curtains. The most profound obscurity reigned in the apartment. The Baron must be asleep on a chair, as he had planned. Besides, how could he dare ask the palatine of Rava to do service as his valet? Still, if he threw himself out of bed he ran the risk of hurting himself, or at least of not being able to get back again. All this was very embarrassing, and poor Ménard, sitting up straight in bed, grew every moment more miserable.

Necessity knows no law, says an old proverb; and then, the Baron was so good, so obliging, so accommodating! All this emboldened Ménard. He coughed, lightly at first, then a little louder; then he ventured to say very low,—

“Baron, if you are not asleep, might I venture to ask your aid? I am a little embarrassed, Baron.”

But at that moment Baron Dubourg was with Goton, occupied in teaching her what a boudoir is, and that a garret, a grove, an attic, a grotto, a kitchen, a cellar, even a stable, can merit this name when one is with the person he loves. Goton comprehended this perfectly, because she was quick

to understand ; and Dubourg made an excellent monitor.

"The Baron seems to sleep very soundly," said Ménard to himself. "Cursed inn ! infernal bed ! where I cannot turn around without scratching my sides ! I believe the mattress is made of oat straw. There ! no matter what happens, I will try to get out."

Ménard already had one of his little legs out of bed, and he was about to advance the other when a horrible noise was heard in the room. A chair was overturned, a vase which was upon it fell and was broken, several objects glided along the walls, then fled, pushing open the door which gave egress to the landing. Ménard was frozen with terror. He called in a suffocated voice, —

"Baron ! Baron ! Monsieur, is it you ?"

No one answered. The poor man no longer felt the courage to leave his bed. He shrank under his covers, buried his head in the blankets, and his fright removed all necessity for leaving his bed. He went to sleep without further trouble ; for they were neither thieves nor demons which caused the disturbance in his chamber, but merely two cats, which found the door open, and came in to visit their ordinary home. They disputed over a morsel of rabbit, which the Baron had thrown under the table while he assured his companions that it was excellent. The two Toms overturned a chair on which was a pitcher of water ; the fall terrified

them, so that they fled down the stairs, abandoning the object of the contention.

Day came at last. The innkeeper left his chaste half, who rose at six in order to be dressed by nine. Frederic awoke; Ménard did the same, and turned uncomfortably in his bed, where he was very ill at ease. Dubourg had nothing more to teach Goton, and wished to regain his room. But it was in vain that he sought to leave the stable. He pushed and shook the door for five minutes, but it would not open.

"Goton, Goton, how have you fastened this door?" said Dubourg.

"Bah! it does not fasten," replied the stout girl, rubbing her eyes.

"But I can't open it."

"Push hard."

"I am pushing as hard as I can, but it will not open."

"Oh, what weaklings these city men are!" said the servant. She gave a stout blow of her fist to the door, but it did not stir.

"Zounds! They must have put the bar across outside."

"Who the devil would have played us such a trick as that?"

"Indeed, now! It must have been one of the pedlers. Because they were casting sheep's-eyes at me, you see; and perhaps they might have seen that you were here."

"I don't want to spend the day in the stable!"

"I will milk the cow for you."

"Much obliged!"

"You can tell me some stories."

"I don't know any more. This smell of the cow, and the manure, — it affects my head."

"What! But a while ago you said that the stable was a little — what was it now? — a little boudoir, — very nice with me!"

"Yes, but a while ago and the present are two different things. No place can please us, Goton, if we are forced to stay in it. But it is broad day. If this little window were not so narrow one could get out there."

"Oh, it is not possible."

"Ah, an idea! That is it! You must make use of circumstances. Come to this stone, Goton. Mount with me, so that we can reach the height of the window, and shout as I do."

"But what shall I say?"

"Shout just what I do."

Dubourg put his head in the opening above the door and began to cry with all his might, —

"Thieves! Help! Stop the carriage! Stop thief!"

Goton whispered, astonished, —

"But where are the thieves?"

Dubourg said severely, "Are you going to do what I told you?"

"All right; I'll shout," said the servant, "if it amuses you."

Goton's huge voice mingled with that of Dubourg, and in a moment roused all the household, and set a large part of the village on foot.

The landlord ran as fast as his left leg would let him, for it was two inches shorter than the right. Frederic hurried from his chamber; Ménard sat up, and by the aid of his pupil gained the floor. He slipped on his coat and hastened after Frederic, much more excited than he. Frederic had recognized the voice of Dubourg, and, more curious than disturbed, did not doubt that he would see a new tragedy of the Baron's invention. All the neighborhood gathered in the court. The inhabitants of the vicinity ran in, and some workmen going to their daily labor joined the crowd attracted by the cries of Dubourg, who did not stop repeating, —

“Catch the thief! Stop the carriage!”

Everybody turned, no one saw the carriage, and Goton shouted in an ear-splitting voice, —

“The Baron's coach has been carried off!”

Someone hurried to the stable and opened the door, and Dubourg rushed out like a madman, crying, shouting, raging about the court as if he had lost his wits, not noticing that his trousers were stained by contact with the stable.

“What is the matter, dear Baron,” asked Ménard with terror.

“What is it? My coach! That scoundrel of a postilion! He has run off! He has carried it

away, with fifty thousand francs in gold in one of my trunks!"

"O my God!"

"My father's coach! The Potoski carriage! I don't mind the money — but a coach in which the princess of Hungary — O my friends! run in every direction! try all the roads! A hundred louis to the one who brings it back!"

"A hundred louis to the one who brings back the coach!" cried Goton.

"They'll be very lucky if they find it," said Dubourg under his breath. "It must be near Paris by this time."

"But how did you happen to be shut up in the stable with Goton?" asked the innkeeper.

"That is not hard to understand. In the night I heard a noise in the court. I descended softly, and there I found my rascal of a postilion harnessing the horses and intending to slip away while we slept. Unhappily I did not have my pistols, and this postilion is a lusty scoundrel, stronger than I. I started to run for help, but the fellow seized me, and, in spite of my resistance, forced me into the stable, where this girl sleeps, and where he imprisoned us. We began to shout immediately, but you slept like the dead."

"Yes, that is all true," declared Goton, who began to understand now why Dubourg wanted her to cry "Stop thief."

"We will have to send to the mayor," said

Ménard. "He will call out the police. You have a mayor here?"

"Yes, monsieur; it is the wine merchant of the neighborhood. But to get the police you will have to send to the next village, and that will take two hours at least."

"Don't be disturbed, dear Ménard," said Frederic, smiling. "We have a good post-chaise to replace the Baron's coach."

"But, your excellency — fifty thousand francs in gold!"

"Oh, it is not the loss of this sum which troubles me!" cried Dubourg. "My fortune is beyond such a reverse. Fortunately, there are fifteen thousand francs in my pocketbook, to meet the first expenses of my journey. I regret my wardrobe; it was in an enormous trunk concealed under the carriage. All my linen and my different costumes, alas!"

"You certainly need a change of clothes," remarked Frederic, glancing maliciously at Dubourg and Goton. "You seem to have had a fall in the stable."

"You can be sure I did not stay there willingly," replied Dubourg, returning Frederic's look with one which seemed to say, You need not have called attention to that. "Ask Goton how that rascal pushed me."

"Oh, yes, indeed he did!" cried the girl. "He knocked you down more than four times!"

"Anyway, dear friend, my wardrobe is at your service," said Frederic.

"And mine also, Baron," added Ménard, saluting Dubourg. He then returned to his chamber to finish dressing, while Dubourg assured him he would go and carry his complaint to the mayor.

Frederic's postilion soon appeared, and informed them that the post-chaise was ready for departure.

Ménard descended from his chamber, blessing Heaven that the time had come to leave this inn, which had been so unsatisfactory a harbor for them, and had given their journey so unpleasant a beginning.

Goton had a last word to say in the ear of Dubourg, and the Baron was very happy to see the end of his adventure, especially without loss of caste with the friendly and obsequious Ménard.

The chaise awaited the travellers, and each one mounted it with pleasure. Dubourg was enchanted to be rid of his coach; Ménard was anxious to get as far as possible from the cats, the beds and ragouts of the inn; and Frederic was much happier in his own travelling carriage, which was roomy and well hung, than in the dilapidated coach of the Baron.

Ménard breathed some sighs over the place which had been occupied by a princess of Hungary; but he knew that he was still near the snuff-box of the King of Prussia, and he had hopes of drinking Tokay from the cave of Tékély.

CHAPTER VI

THE LITTLE WOOD

OUR travellers arrived without mishap at the neighboring village, where they stopped for breakfast. Ménard was lost in admiration of the composure with which his noble companion sustained the double loss of the fifty thousand francs and his carriage.

"I am somewhat of a philosopher, Monsieur Ménard," said Dubourg, "and I care little for fortune; indeed, I believe that I should prefer mediocrity to a more elevated station: '*Magnus servitus est magna fortuna.*'"

"You are not an ordinary man, my dear Dubourg, I am assured of it by the manner in which you sustain the most annoying reverses," said Frederic, "there are so many people who are philosophical only in good fortune, like those cowards who vaunt their courage when the danger is passed."

"Certainly," said M. Ménard, "I am not in the least ambitious, and I know how to submit to circumstances; however, I find that it requires great decision, and great strength of mind to renounce indifferently a good table and a good

bed; and when I say a good bed, I do not mean a high bed."

At the end of the breakfast Dubourg discovered that M. Ménard paid the bill.

"Do you mean to say that you do not carry the purse?" he said to Frederic.

"No; my father put M. Ménard in charge of the funds."

"The devil! That's too bad. When he sees that I never pay what will he think?"

"But when you said you had been robbed, why did you tell that you had still fifteen thousand francs in your pocketbook?"

"Ah, why, why!" cried Dubourg, striking his forehead; "because I wanted to play the grand gentleman, and not let your companion think that you paid for me."

"I do not dare ask Ménard for the funds; I am afraid it would hurt his feelings."

"Don't bother; I'll see that he gives them up voluntarily."

"How?"

"You will see."

"If you hold the cashbox, don't play the gentleman too fast. Remember this money must last us a long time."

"Do you think me still a heedless gambler, as I was at Paris? No, dear Frederic; I am too happy to travel with you to be guilty of follies. I repeat that I shall be a second mentor."

"Yes; your adventure in the stable makes a pretty beginning."

"But I had to find a good lie for the coach."

"And did you have to shut yourself up with Mademoiselle Goton for that? Good-for-nothing!"

"Go on! don't be such a Cato! If Mademoiselle Goton had big eyes and a sentimental figure, you might have wanted to milk the cows with her yourself."

"Well, anyway, I beg you, don't tell so many gasconades to this good Ménard, for he believes every word you say. And I have told him, besides, that I know your family, and that you are very well thought of in Paris."

"That is very good. I will only say what I think is necessary to sustain my character. You must not forget that I have made myself a Polish nobleman."

"And is that the reason you talk all the time of Brittany?"

The travellers here returned to the carriage. Before they reached the town in which they were to spend the night they were to pass through a piece of very thick woodland. Dubourg had made his plans, and he began to give a serious turn to the conversation; for he knew that the mood of the individual increases or diminishes the importance of events or circumstances, and that in the world, as in the theatre, we must often

lead up to climaxes, and prepare for them, or they lose their effect.

"I know nothing better than the pleasure of travelling," said Dubourg. "Why should we be so often troubled with the thought that an unfortunate accident may disarrange all our plans?"

"It is the same with all the joys of life," replied Frederic. "Do you know any upon which we can count for the morrow? It is a great happiness to be loved by the woman whom one adores; but in the very moment that you count on pleasing her, that you are sure of her heart, of her oaths, a young Adonis arrives, who claims her, a gay warrior turns her head, a brilliant mind fascinates her; and the woman whom you could trust until then betrays you in the moment when you counted most upon her love. Alas! the happiness of our whole future depends often on a slight accident, and as a result of it the edifice crumbles like a house of cards."

"M. de Montreville speaks very wisely," said Ménard. "One is often deceived in his hopes. How often have I dined at a celebrated restaurant, and found the soup a complete failure!"

"A philosopher always endures these reverses either of fortune, of love or of pleasure," said Dubourg; "but there are some things against which philosophy is no protection. For instance, if you are attacked upon the road and assassinated by brigands."

These words made Ménard tremble. His face lengthened. His look became perturbed, and he glanced at Dubourg, whose countenance wore a sombre expression and anything but reassuring.

"Such things are indeed very dangerous for travellers. They say that it is very risky to cross Italy. You have travelled so much, your excellency, you can probably tell us."

"No doubt, Monsieur Ménard, there are brigands in Italy. The peculiarity of that country is that noon is the most dangerous hour there, for then the brigands alone will brave the heat of the sun. But the fact is that if there are brigands in the Apennines, in Germany and in England, unhappily there are also brigands in France. It is now almost as dangerous to travel there."

"What! in France, Baron? I supposed the roads were perfectly safe here."

"I am afraid you don't read the papers, Monsieur Ménard."

"Very rarely, your excellency."

"If you did, you would see that the forests of Senart, of Bondy, of Fontainebleau and of Villers-Cotterets all have their bands of thieves."

"O my God!"

"Unfortunately, these rascals become every day more ferocious. Formerly they were satisfied with robbing you; but now they beat you unmercifully, and it is good fortune if they do not leave you dead upon the spot."

"The devil! the devil!" exclaimed Ménard, looking anxiously about, and glancing up and down the road. The travellers at that moment entered the wood.

"But do not be troubled, Monsieur Ménard," continued Dubourg. "As a rule the robbers seize only the person who carries the money, who pays for the others. They usually tie him to a tree; but first they take off all his clothes, so that he is naked as a worm. In this way they are sure that there is nothing concealed in his clothes, you see."

"But, Baron, this does trouble me very much, for I am the one who carries our travelling purse."

"Ah, if I had known that I would not have said so much. I thought of course Frederic carried it. But in such a case you sell your life dearly. You have arms, of course. You carry pistols?"

"Your excellency, I never use them."

"But you will have to learn to use them. We are even now crossing a wood where three of my friends were killed."

"What! in this wood? But it does seem very thick indeed."

Ménard looked uneasily from right to left. Night had begun to fall, and the darkness which was soon to cover the earth increased his terror.

"Go as fast as you can, postilion!" he cried in an altered voice to their driver.

But the postilion had made a previous arrange-

ment with Dubourg, and therefore did not quicken his pace. Frederic said not a word, and seemed lost in his reflections. Dubourg had drawn his pistols from his pockets, and examined them with attention, glancing from time to time at the wood on either side.

"Zounds! Monsieur Ménard," said Dubourg, taking from his pocket an old worn green pocket-book which he had taken pains to stuff with his last restaurant *ménu* card, to make it as voluminous as possible, "here is my entire fortune for the moment. The fifteen thousand francs which I have left for travelling expenses are in this pocket-book. You have had the kindness to assume the care of Frederic's money; I thought perhaps you would be my cashier also. It is useless for two persons to pay at an inn. It will be better if you will attend to everything."

As he said this he handed the pocketbook to Ménard. The tutor looked at it while he reflected as to what he ought to do. He was much flattered by this mark of confidence, but he had no idea of accepting it.

Just then a sudden whistle sounded and resounded in the wood.

"O Heavens! What is that? What is that?" cried Dubourg, looking about him with a startled expression.

"Do you think we are going to be attacked, Baron?"

"Upon my word, I am afraid of it."

"And M. Frederic is asleep! Do wake him up immediately!"

Frederic had listened to the scene, and made pretence of being sound asleep.

"It is not necessary."

"Take these, Monsieur Ménard," said Dubourg, offering the tutor his pistols as well as his pocketbook; "they are loaded."

"Keep — keep — keep them, your excellency, please. If you wished you might defend it all better — much better than I can!"

Poor Ménard drew forth his pocketbook with one hand, and with the other a purse full of gold, casting upon Dubourg most supplicating glances as he did so.

"Indeed," said Dubourg, "I don't know that I ought to take your money. Perhaps Frederic would not be pleased that I —"

"No! oh, no, Baron! I am certain that he would approve."

"There are four men coming after us with guns!" cried the postilion.

"O my God! we are lost!" exclaimed Ménard.

"Give it — give it to me quick!" cried Dubourg, taking the pocketbook and the purse. "I see that it is my affair."

Ménard crawled under the seat. The postilion swore, shouted, and whipped the horses. Dubourg leaned out of the carriage and fired two pistol shots

in the air. Frederic made believe to wake suddenly. The carriage flew like the wind, and at the end of five minutes they were out of the wood.

"We are saved!" cried Dubourg, helping Ménard to rise.

"What! truly, Baron?"

"We are out of the wood. There is no more danger; but we have escaped beautifully — have we not, Frederic?"

"And the thieves, your excellency?"

"I killed two of them."

"And I saw two others run," said Frederic.

"Ah, Baron, how fortunate we are to have you with us!"

They reached the town in safety. Dubourg was enchanted to be the cashier, and he commenced his new office by slipping a piece of gold into the hand of the postilion, for the bit of whistling which he had done in the woodland.

CHAPTER VII

DUBOURG CONTINUES TO PLAY THE GENTLEMAN. HIS MANNER OF KEEPING THE CASH

OUR amiable friend Dubourg had never, in the whole course of his life, been the actual possessor of such a considerable sum of money as that which Ménard had just confided to his care. As a rule, young people are not in the habit of hoarding, and Dubourg, who was a great lover of play and constantly frequented gambling-houses for the purpose of indulging this passion, and who was, besides, fond of pleasure and good living; who was also one of those persons who are always wholly occupied with the present, entirely oblivious of the past, and who never allow themselves, no matter how pressing their circumstances may be, the smallest degree of anxiety in regard to the future; — had not acquired the commendable habit of practising economy.

During the time that he was employed as a clerk in a government office, the debts incurred for his expenses and maintenance had been so heavy that he had never handled more than a third of his salary, and, as a rule, that third very seldom remained in his hands for more than

three days, but during that time Dubourg lived like the head of a department.

In the banking-house he was obliged to work harder, and he consoled himself by the delicate lunches he had brought to him; so that the charges of the coffee-house and restaurant keepers ate up a large part of what the cashier paid him each month.

When he was with the notary he fell into the habit of playing *écarté*, which was prevalent among the students. Then it was much worse; a month's pay was often dissipated in a single evening. He was fortunate indeed if he did not pledge the succeeding one also.

While he was with the lawyer, he was constantly in attendance upon his employer's wife, whom her husband confided to his care. He thus lost entirely the habit of work. He sought pleasure parties constantly, and wished only to follow the fashions, to eclipse in every way the fashionable young *élégants* of the capital. Thus his tailor, his boot-maker and his stableman divided his income.

If the old aunt sent him money, it was never a very large sum. The largest gift she had made was that of the five hundred francs, which she sent as the result of his story of his marriage and the three children; and we have seen what use he made of that.

To possess eight thousand francs — for the sum was almost complete — was for Dubourg like hav-

ing a fortune to which there was no end. This sum did not exactly belong to him ; but he could direct its employment, he could use it as he saw fit, and he was certain that no one would ask him to account for its expenditure. He would not have appropriated a penny of this money to his own use, but he wished to do honor to those to whom it belonged, and was not at all unwilling to enjoy it with them.

Dubourg therefore ordered an exquisite supper to be served to the travellers in their apartments, which were the most beautiful in the hotel.

At sight of the collation with which the table was loaded, Frederic cried,—

“Are you crazy, Dubourg?” He continued to give him this name in the presence of Ménard, who was no longer surprised at it. “There is supper enough here for ten people.”

“My dear Frederic, I have a good appetite and am disposed to do honor to it, and I am sure M. Ménard will second me.”

“With infinite pleasure, Baron. This adventure in the wood has made my stomach perfectly empty.”

“But I will wager that you have necessitated a slim diet to all the other travellers in the hotel.”

“My faith! let them eat what they can get. I think we have a right to allow ourselves a little extra for the horrible supper we had yesterday in that miserable inn.”

"I agree with the Baron. We are truly in need of refreshment."

"But —"

"And what the devil will you have! Shall we travel like wolves? Shall we eat at a table d'hôte like wretched tramps? We must keep up our rank, dear friend, and I feel that my stomach is not disposed to deny it."

"The Baron speaks wisely. It is quite necessary to keep up our rank," said Ménard, as he accepted the wing of a roast capon which Dubourg presented to him. "You know that was the wish of the Count, your father."

"Yes, my friend," continued Dubourg, pouring some wine, which was the oldest and finest the cellar of the hotel could furnish, "I think you should obey the Count, your father; and my faith! all things considered, I don't see why I should preserve an incognito any longer. I am now far from Paris. It is settled! I will resume my titles, and I wish to receive the honors that are due me."

"Ah, Dubourg, Dubourg, you will still do foolish things, I am afraid," said Frederic to his friend sotto voce. But Dubourg did not listen. He was in an ecstasy. He had never felt so happy. He poured himself glass after glass of wine, while Ménard helped himself voluptuously to a mushroom pie, the delicious odor of which tempted him agreeably.

"What do you think of my plan, Monsieur Ménard?"

"You know, your excellency, that I have always wished your rank known."

"Very good; I am baron, palatine, etc., and we will prove it wherever we go."

"Surely, Baron, people will always recognize that from the nobleness of your manners."

"Bravo, monsieur! That speech is worthy of your convivial spirit. But Frederic is unworthy of sitting at our table. Won't you have a little of this hare, Monsieur Ménard?"

"Gladly, Baron."

"One must be a philosopher — when there is nothing else to do; but good philosophy consists in enjoying life and finding amusement whenever there's a chance. Horace has said, '*Dulce est desipere in loco.*' Isn't that so, Monsieur Ménard?"

"Yes, Baron; but Juvenal recommends a rare use of pleasure, — '*Voluptatis commendat rarior usus.*'"

"Don't you suppose that Juvenal had a bad stomach?"

"That is very possible, your excellency."

"Take one glass more, Monsieur Ménard, in memory of Anacreon, Horace, Epicurus, and all the great *bons vivants*."

"We forget Lucullus, Baron."

"That's right; let us pour another bumper for Lucullus."

As a result of drinking so much to the memory of the ancients, the two banqueters began to lose thought of the present, and Dubourg cried, as he rose from the table, —

“My faith! I defy all the palatines of Rava, of Cracovia and of Krapach to make a better supper!”

“Take care what you do, you confounded prattler,” muttered Frederic, aside.

“Don’t be worried,” replied Dubourg, shouting a little louder; “I tell you that I will be responsible for all, and that Papa Ménard is a man whom I esteem, whom I love; and I will close his eyes with pheasants and truffles.”

It was fortunate that Ménard had reached a point where he heard only confusedly what was said around him. He felt that he was beginning to be overcome by the frequent libations which he had taken with his noble companion, and he rose from the table to seek his chamber. He felt his way along the walls, and reached his bed at last, which he requested should be made up very low.

He went to his repose well satisfied with the repast he had made, and much pleased with the manner in which the Baron had done the honors of the table. He congratulated himself that he had been wise enough to put the funds in the Baron’s care, for he would not have dared order such a delicate supper. He foresaw that the Baron

would see to it that they were most delicately served, for he seemed both a gormand and a gourmet; and, now that he had renounced his incognito, he would wish everything expensive as befitted a grand seigneur. In fact, Ménard was enchanted with their travelling companion, and he went to sleep reflecting on the honors and pleasures which this journey would bring him.

The day following the supper Frederic thought it best to reason a little with Dubourg.

"Do you wish to take back the cashbox?" said Dubourg. "Take it and order as you please; you are the master. But, lost as you are in your melancholy reveries, you will order very poor dinners; and when you are travelling for pleasure it seems to me quite essential that meals should be comfortably arranged."

"But at least be reasonable."

"Yes, and are you not very much to be pitied, because you have with you two men who will keep you in good spirits, one by his wit, and the other from the enthusiasm with which he makes a partridge disappear?"

"But where is the sense in this idea of playing the grand gentleman before all the world?"

"Because we will amuse ourselves better. Besides, you are a count, and to travel as your equal I must at least be a baron."

"But the strong box will be emptied much more quickly."

"True; but we shall not see the end of it for a long time; and then, you know, you have a father and I have an aunt."

"Yes; I advise you to think of that."

"But you see that your mentor approves of me."

"By Heavens, you make him so tipsy that he no longer knows what he is talking about!"

"Never mind; I will be responsible for everything."

Our travellers were once more en route. The horses, which belonged to Frederic, were driven like the wind. Ménard was a little astonished at this fashion of travelling; but he said, "Ah, well, great gentlemen are accustomed to riding at this rapid pace," and so he hung on to the curtain to keep from falling, and was well content.

At all the inns everyone made a point of treating them like grand gentlemen. They were invariably given the best rooms, the finest foods were served to them, and the very oldest wines were found on their table. Ménard was astonished, enchanted, because he believed that his excellency the Baron had joined his fifteen thousand francs to the sum which was put in his care; and he considered him too great, too generous, to trouble himself about any difference in the proportion of payment.

Our travellers reached Lyons in this manner. They had paused upon the way only to admire

the view occasionally, and to give their horses time to breathe. They intended, however, to pass several days at Lyons. The young Montreville was delighted to see it, to become familiar with its neighborhood, and to stroll upon the banks of the Rhône. His two companions were perfectly willing to stay some little time in a city where they could live as luxuriously as at Paris.

Our travellers stopped at one of the best hotels of the city, and they immediately attracted much attention. Dubourg was always noticeable because of the air of authority which he assumed, and Frederic was remarked on account of his unusual figure and bearing. The party was evidently extravagant, and lived at large expense; and this is sure to be a popular recommendation in a hotel. If they had all failed of attracting attention themselves, they would have become the observed of all observers through the care which Ménard took to have his companions recognized.

"You have the honor of lodging his excellency the Baron Potoski, palatine of Rava," he said, "and the young Count of Montreville."

The travellers occupied a superb apartment on the first floor. Their meals were served in their rooms. They had the best of cheer. Dubourg ordered everything. Frederic left all details in his care, but he repeated his injunction to be careful.

"Take care what you do," he said; and Du-

bourg responded, "Don't worry," with such assurance that the young count ended by letting him manage all without any restrictions.

As to Ménard, he was more than ever enthusiastic over the Baron, who led him into such a very agreeable way of life. Frederic went out alone to stroll upon the banks of the Rhône, and, charmed by the enchanting scenery which he discovered, he often did not return to the hotel until evening or the next day.

Dubourg, like all liars, who end in believing their own humbuggery, had so identified himself with the personage he represented that he would have come to blows with anyone who insinuated a doubt as to his rank. It delighted him during the absence of his friend to exhibit his magnificence to the entire city.

He walked out with Ménard, his arm carelessly locked in that of the tutor; and the manner of both was sure to excite comment. Ménard wore his hat pushed back on his head, in order to see and hear better. He held himself very erect, walked with much precision, and endeavored to assume a noble and gracious air, when he went out with his excellency the Baron. Dubourg promenaded all over the city, his head covered with a huge three-cornered hat, doubled in size by a black plume, and ornamented by a steel cord, placing it on his head after the fashion of the marquis of Molière. The remainder of his

costume did not correspond at all with the hat; but men no longer wear embroidered coats, in promenading the streets, and Dubourg was obliged to satisfy himself with putting silver tassels on his boots à la hussarde. He felt sure that this must look very Polish. He wore his coat open, because that gave him a freer air; and he made constant use of an enormous lorgnette hung about his neck by a red ribbon.

The unusual dress of Dubourg attracted all eyes. Some took him for an Englishman, some for a Russian, others for a Prussian; but whenever any curious person paused and smiled while he looked him over, Dubourg levelled a glance at him which deprived him of all desire to laugh at his expense, and convinced him that, whoever the stranger might be, he was not of a temper to endure laughter at his expense.

If anyone walked near our travellers for any length of time, he would not be slow to learn who was the gentleman in the plumed hat, who swaggered so agreeably when he used his eyeglass. Ménard talked very loud, especially if he perceived that he was observed. When he addressed his companion he did not fail to give him his titles. He emphasized "Baron Potoski," "palatine." He even went so far, sometimes, as "prince of Rava and Sandomir"!

For eight days they had been at Lyons. Frédéric had not wearied in the least of visiting the

delightful suburbs of the city, but Dubourg began to find it somewhat tiresome to show himself on the promenades about town, his arm supported on that of M. Ménard. They had visited all the points of interest, all the theatres, all the cafés; everywhere Dubourg had played the grand gentleman, and Ménard the comrade without suspicion. The poor tutor had the most perfect faith, and felt highly honored to go about so, with the noble friend of his pupil; and he was always lost in admiration at his appropriate quotations, and his endless stories of travel in the four quarters of the globe.

For some days Dubourg had been urging Fred-eric to leave Lyons, and the young count constantly postponed their departure until the next day. At last one morning Dubourg received a letter which deprived him of all desire to go farther.

This letter was addressed to "His Excellency the Baron Potoski, Polish nobleman." Dubourg read the address twice. "Who can have written it? Who gave him my name?" he said. He asked his landlady who had brought the letter.

"It was," she said, "a servant in livery, who had been told to give the letter only to the Baron himself."

Dubourg hastily broke the seal, and read the following note:—

His Excellency the Baron Potoski is invited to spend the

evening with Madame the Marquise de Versac, who will be charmed to possess the noble stranger occasionally during his stay in the city.

The address of the Marquise was at the end of the note, which diffused an odor of musk and ambergris through the apartment. Dubourg read it several times.

"The devil!" said Dubourg. "An invitation from a marquise! That's flattering enough. How did she hear of me? Oh, well, you are soon known when you begin to live in a certain style. For the last week I have been walking about the town with Ménard like a great white bear, and no doubt everyone has begun to talk about me."

Dubourg called the landlady again and asked her if she knew Madame de Versac.

"The Marquise de Versac? I am not acquainted with her, monsieur, but I know her well by name and repute. The family is one of the oldest and richest of the city, and I know that madame has a country-seat on the banks of the Rhône about four leagues from the city."

Dubourg asked nothing more. He was enchanted. He dismissed his hostess, and walked about his room, saying with delight, —

"Certainly I will accept the invitation of Madame the Marquise. It is an acquaintance which can be nothing but agreeable to me: and how can I tell; perhaps I shall find some baroness or viscountess whose head I can turn, and who will

marry me and give me lands, castles. Well, well; that would not be so surprising. I am young; I am not bad-looking; I have a certain air, which probably has attracted Madame de Versac, and — well, supposing she herself — oh, I have forgotten to ask the landlady !”

Dubourg rang; again the landlady appeared.

“ Pardon me, my dear madame,” he said; “ I have some reason for wishing to know if Madame the Marquise de Versac is married.”

“ She must be a widow, monsieur,” replied the landlady. “ M. de Versac died three years ago, and I have heard nothing of her since.”

“ Thank you ! That is very good indeed, madame,” said Dubourg, dismissing his landlady. He fairly leaped with joy, and rushed to the mirror to reassure himself as to the good looks which had evidently attracted Madame de Versac.

“ She is a widow ! She must be still a widow, or the invitation would have the name of her husband. This becomes very interesting. A young widow who is very rich and who has a magnificent country house writes to me that she will be charmed to possess me ! That is what she says. I will read it again. Yes, charmed to possess me ! It seems to me that there is almost a declaration of love. You shall possess me, delightful woman; I promise that. Ah, I forgot to ask if she is pretty. Of course she cannot be otherwise; but anyway, I do not care much for mere beauty; I

am reasonable, and I want the more substantial attractions. This evening she will see the noble stranger. Oh, the devil! but what will she think when she finds that he is only a plain citizen? After all, I am a good Breton, and I am as good as anyone. Besides, we have not reached the explanatory point yet. I must begin by attracting her. When a woman is once in love she forgets ranks, differences. Love equalizes all. The god of thunders was smitten with simple mortals, and was not the shepherd Paris the beloved of Venus herself? I will give Madame de Versac all the apples she wants if she will only choose me."

Ménard entered as Dubourg was promenading about, endeavoring to give himself the airs of the court. As soon as he saw the tutor he stuck the letter under his nose, exclaiming, —

"Tolle, lege, my dear Ménard." Ménard retreated because the odor of musk which the note exhaled was unpleasant to him.

"I hope that this is the favorite perfume of Madame la Marquise," exclaimed Dubourg, sniffing luxuriously the scented missive. "Look here, Ménard; what do you say to this letter?"

"I don't see anything surprising in that, Baron, for you must be accustomed to things of that sort wherever you go."

"That is true; you are right, Ménard. I am not saying that the letter is surprising, but it is very well phrased — is it not?"

"Very well phrased."

"It seems to show a woman who is pretty sure of herself—does it not?"

"Certainly it does, your excellency."

"But it is not at all like the notes that the little Delphine used to write me."

"And who was the little Delphine, monsieur?"

"Ah, she was a little countess of the Boulevard du Temple, and her house was a sort of rendez-vous for men of my rank."

"You will accept the invitation of Madame la Marquise—will you not, Baron?"

"Shall I accept it? Oh, certainly. Let us dine early, Monsieur Ménard, so that I shall have more time for my toilet. Where is Frederic?"

"No doubt he is visiting some new spot. He warned me that he would not return until this evening. He expects to leave tomorrow."

"Oh, tomorrow? Well, we will see. We have plenty of time, and it is very pleasant in Lyons—is it not, Monsieur Ménard?"

"Delightful, your excellency; but you know we expect to travel, to see—"

"I know. I know that we should not leave a city like this, until we know it thoroughly; and Frederic cannot do that when he is always in the suburbs. We ought to persuade him of that, M. Ménard."

"I will do my best, your excellency."

Dubourg did not dine. He was too much

absorbed in his evening's project to have much appetite. A child does not eat when it expects to go to the theatre. We are all big children, and the prospect of a new pleasure has the same effect.

Dubourg thought of his toilet. If he had been given more time he would have ordered a coat; but as it was he would have to be content with one of Frederic's, who was much more slender than he, so that he would have to wear it open. Should he wear boots? At the house of a marquise that would not be correct, surely. But what would he do for trousers? Those of Frederic were too small for him. Unfortunately, this garment is not like a coat, which you can leave unbuttoned. Ménard would lend him a pair, of course; but they would be too large. At length he decided to go in boots. He was a stranger and a Pole; that would be his excuse. Besides, his big silver tassels pleased him exceedingly.

It was only eight o'clock, and for more than an hour Dubourg had been dressed, walking up and down his apartment, his plumed hat under his arm, studying how to make very distinguished bows, how to smile with grace and to walk nobly. He had put the entire contents of his cashbox in his pocket, and as he had no watch he debated whether he should take off the steel ornament of his hat and attach it to his fob. It might, however, be recognized as the cord he usually wore on his

hat, and that would not do. He contented himself finally with a red ribbon, only allowing a tiny end of it to appear. Nine o'clock sounded at last. It was the fashionable hour of assembly. A carriage was waiting for him; he sprang in, and gave the driver the address which was upon the note of the Marquise.

The carriage stopped in a street which seemed deserted, and before a very shabby-looking house. Dubourg descended from his cab. There was no porter, and a footman on the lookout for arriving guests hastened to receive Dubourg, and mounted the staircase before him in order to show him the way. The staircase was anything but clean, and two lamps had been placed at the foot of it, which seemed very much surprised at finding themselves there. Dubourg, however, was absorbed in thinking how gallantly he should address the Marquise, when presented to her, and he did not observe the unattractive surroundings.

The footman opened a door to an apartment which served as antechamber. It was impossible for the sharpest eye to discover that it contained a vestige of furniture. It was very dimly lighted; but it was, nevertheless, easy to see that the walls were spotted with oil, and it was impossible to determine what had been the original color of the parquet floor, it was so dirty. But the footman hurried Dubourg through this first chamber, and, opening the door of the adjoining salon, he an-

nounced with great impressiveness, "His Excellency the Baron Potoski."

At this name there was a general movement in the salon, and a lady arose, and hurried forward to greet Dubourg, expressing infinite pleasure at receiving him there.

Dubourg poured forth all that he had in his head; he advanced, bowing to right and left, and at length threw himself upon a couch near the Marquise de Versac, and began to examine her more carefully. He saw that he was right not to have been misled by a chimera in the beginning. The mistress of the house was a woman who appeared to be about forty-five years old, in spite of the pains she had taken to rouge, to blacken her eyebrows, redden her lips and whiten her skin. She was dressed with elegance, but at the same time she did not seem to be accustomed to the management of her train. Her head was overburdened with flowers and ribbons, and a triple collar of pearls covered a neck which was yellow and wrinkled, and was fit companion to a pair of skeleton-like shoulders which the Marquise had the barbarity to expose as recklessly as if they would rejoice the eye.

Dubourg did not stop to analyze all that. He recalled what his landlady had told him, and tried to find the Marquise charming. She said to him the most flattering things, while he cast his eye over the apartment in which he was seated.

An ancient chandelier, suspended from the ceiling, lighted the salon, which was very large. The hangings had been very beautiful, but began to show decided marks of age. An immense carpet had been spread upon the floor, which it was evident had not been originally intended for a salon. The furniture was of two colors. There was a blue sofa, and some yellow arm-chairs, and the smaller chairs did not seem to belong together at all.

Instead of a clock an enormous bouquet stood on the mantelpiece, and there were a great many candles. A number of card-tables of different sizes completed the furnishings of the apartment, and everything appeared to Dubourg to be as ancient as the family of Madame de Versac.

After he had analyzed the salon Dubourg turned his attention to the company assembled. There were only three ladies besides the Marquise. One, who was about sixty years old, was called the Baroness, and she talked constantly of her estates, her châteaux, her property, her footmen. Her conversation was carried on in such loud tones that it became very tiresome, and it was impossible to avoid hearing all she said. A young lady, rather pretty, was present, who, on the contrary, scarcely opened her lips except to laugh. She seemed a little awkward, said nothing but "Yes" or "No," and was addressed as the Viscountess of Fairfignan. The third was about

thirty years old, and was called Madame de Grandcourt. She was stretched very elegantly upon a divan, and played the coquette, throwing languid glances at the men and rolling her eyes from one to the other. Her eyes had once been beautiful but had become so sunken and haggard that the eyebrows appeared to tower above them.

Seven or eight men formed the remainder of the company, each one giving himself the title of count, baron or chevalier. None of them, however, displayed any wealth or elegance in their dress. Monsieur the Chevalier wore a coat of which the sleeves were so short that they did not reach his wrists, and when he drew out his handkerchief he took care to turn his back to the assembled guests.

The Count wore lace ruffles which were torn, and a shirt frill which was soiled with liquors and tobacco. He displayed his hand with much complacency, for it glittered with rings in which were huge red and yellow stones ; but the hand itself was so black that its effect with the jewels and lace was quite singular.

Last, but not least, the Baron was very elegant with powdered hair ; but he was unaccustomed to his queue, which continually caught in his collar. He wore a new black coat, and old nankeen trousers over which dangled some ancient trinkets made of American shells.

The other men were dressed in much the same

taste. Dubourg was astonished at the bearing of all these noble personages, and said to himself, "Confound me, if the landlady had not told me about the family of the Marquise de Versac, I should believe I had fallen in with a madame who sells old clothes, and some counts and lords of Empty Pocket Street!"

The conversation did not languish by any means. Everyone talked, laughed and gossiped. Everyone showed the greatest consideration for the Baron Potoski. The Marquise overwhelmed him with courtesies. The old Baroness invited him immediately to visit her on her estates, the Countess looked at him smilingly, and Madame Grandcourt launched some glances in his direction which were quite unequivocal. The men applauded everything he said. Dubourg could not fail to be affected by such marked attention, for men of the utmost experience and finesse will be flattered by what appeals to their self-conceit.

Presently punch, liquors and cakes were brought in. The assembled company fell upon the refreshments immediately. The old Baroness drank like a Swiss grenadier, the Viscountess burrowed among the cakes, and the languishing Grandcourt swallowed two glasses of punch in succession and cried out that it was not strong enough.

Dubourg imitated his neighbors. He took punch and complimented Madame de Versac on the gayety of her circle.

"Oh, we are unconventional," replied the Marquise. "Among people who know each other, is it worth while to keep up burdensome formalities?"

"Indeed, you are right; I love that," replied Dubourg. The punch had begun to excite him a little, and he was ready for anything. "Etiquette is a burden which it is better to lay aside before the door of people of esprit."

"Ah, Monsieur de Potoski, you speak like Barême!" cried the old Baroness, refilling her glass with punch. "You are a palatine of the old school."

"Not so very old, madame."

"But of the best at least," said Madame de Versac, touching Dubourg lightly with her foot. The Polish baron turned, and proceeded to glance at her with extreme tenderness; he then slipped his hand gently behind the Marquise and ventured to pinch her a little, quite according to what he considered the demands of good form. She allowed herself to be pinched without paying the slightest attention to it, and Dubourg was delighted with the refinement of her manner.

"As for me, I like to talk foolishness," said the young Viscountess, who had dared risk a few remarks since the punch and cakes appeared. "I get awful tired of folks bein' solemn all the time."

The vulgarity of the Viscountess' speech brought a slight expression of scorn to Dubourg's

face. Madame de Versac observed it, and hastened to whisper in his ear, "She is a German and has a very broad accent."

"Well, aren't you going to do anything this evening, Madame la Marquise?" asked the Chevalier, pulling down his sleeves to make them longer.

"Truly, my dear," said the Baroness. "Why can't we have a little game?"

"Oh, yes, let us do something!" exclaimed Madame de Grandcourt, rolling her great languishing eyes; "I always want to be doing something."

"Perhaps Monsieur de Potoski does not play," said the Marquise, turning to Dubourg.

"Pardon me, madame! Oh, yes; I shall enjoy playing."

"In that case I will gladly make up the parties. You really wish to play, Baron?"

"With great pleasure!" cried Dubourg. He was enchanted that he could at last withdraw his arm from Madame de Versac's waist, where it threatened to go to sleep. The parties for cards were immediately formed. The Chevalier proposed a little game of creps for the ladies. Dubourg said to himself that in fine society ladies seemed quite different in taste from those of the middle class. Perhaps Madame la Marquise was fond of biribi also.

Monsieur de Potoski was placed at a table with the Count, who, in spite of the length of his frills,

was exceedingly skilful in winning at cards. The game soon became animated. A tall, thin gentleman sitting near Dubourg lost several rolls of twenty-five louis, which were placed upon the table without being undone; and these passed quickly into the pockets of the Count. The thin gentleman, who from his costume might have been a poor lawyer, did not seem to notice his loss.

"These are men who know how to play," reflected Dubourg, — "who play nobly." Not wishing to be behind his companion in the frayed coat, he doubled his bet, and this also passed presently into the hands with frills. The punch went about briskly, for to please Madame de Grandcourt they had made it stronger. Heads became lighter, spirits gayer, and the play was very daring.

Madame de Versac came and seated herself near Dubourg.

"I shall bring success to Monsieur de Potoski," she exclaimed, smiling at him, and showing a set of teeth that would have done credit to a wild boar.

"I wish you could change my luck, madame," exclaimed Dubourg, who had already lost more than a thousand francs, and would gladly win them back. Madame la Marquise responded merely by putting her foot tenderly on his. Each time that Dubourg lost she pressed a little harder, and tried to make him forget his loss by

whispering sweet speeches to him; but Dubourg no longer listened to her.

"I hope to see you often, Monsieur Potoski."

"Yes, madame. — Ten louis more this time!"

"I am a good player!" cried the Count. "I take all that comes."

"But, surely," said the Marquise, "the Count will give you revenge, if you lose this evening."

"If I lose," murmured Dubourg. "Well, I should think so! Nearly two thousand francs already. What a hole in my cashbox!"

"You will come to my country house on the banks of the Rhône, my dear Potoski; I hope you will come."

"Yes, Madame la Marquise — yes. — Always the king on the other side. It is very surprising."

"We will wander through my forest."

"Still another loss!"

"We will breathe the freshness of the evening air."

"I am suffocating here!"

"Will you take something?"

"I wish I could take what I have lost!"

"Do you stay long in Lyons?"

"The devil take me! I don't know!"

Dubourg had lost a thousand crowns, and was bored to death with the pressing of madame's foot under the table. He rose abruptly and walked up and down the salon.

Madame de Grandcourt was lying on a lounge

in a corner. A little gentleman with moustache and whiskers sat on a stool beside her—almost at her feet, in fact. Dubourg felt that according to the law of etiquette he had better not observe them too closely.

At a little distance the old Baroness and the young Viscountess played creps with the Chevalier. The faces of the ladies were exceedingly animated. The Baroness kept a glass of punch constantly before her, and her eyes were fixed wildly upon the dice, while she disputed and exclaimed over a ten-sou piece which she was unwilling to lose.

The Viscountess had found her tongue after eating rolls. She chattered freely in a patois which would have opened Dubourg's eyes if he had kept his head. But his wits were gone completely. The loss he had suffered agitated a brain already overheated by punch and liquors.

He strode up and down the salon, looked blindly about and saw nothing; listened to the sweet nothings of the Marquise without hearing a word she said. He passed his hand over his brow as if to calm his thoughts. He wished to go, but he returned constantly to the gaming-table. "I must win back those thousand crowns—I must," he repeated again and again.

He seated himself before the creps table, and called the Count, who was chatting in a distant corner with the man in the shabby coat. They

were constantly betting rolls of louis which nobody saw.

"Monsieur," said Dubourg, "I hope you will not refuse to give me my revenge at this game, where perhaps I shall have better luck."

"With great pleasure!" replied the count with frills.

He hastened to the creps table, which the old Baroness and the Viscountess quitted immediately. Soon they disappeared into another room, as did Madame Grandcourt; but Dubourg was too much occupied with the game to notice that the ladies had gone.

All the men made a circle about the creps party. They gave Dubourg the choice of being punter or banker. He preferred the latter, and Madame la Marquise placed herself next his chair, and took pains always to give him the shaker and gather up the dice Dubourg dropped. He no longer knew what he should do. He threw the shaker and dice on the floor. They proposed to him a game of trente-et-un, and he accepted in hopes of winning at last. At the end of a half-hour there was not a penny in his purse.

Dubourg felt everywhere; he rummaged in his pockets, in his waistcoat. He had nothing left; he had lost all, and the money was not his to lose. He said nothing more, but walked up and down for a few moments, pale and silent, biting his lips, clenching his fists and muttering an oath

from time to time. The candles in the chandelier began to go out. The Count and the Chevalier whispered together and seemed embarrassed. The Marquise sat in a corner. She did not think it a favorable moment to whisper tender nothings to the Baron Potoski or step on his foot.

At last Dubourg rallied from his depression and came to a decision. He looked for his hat, which he had placed upon an easy-chair, and left the salon, slamming the door violently as he went. He crossed the antechamber, where four big fellows were drinking together, only one of whom was in livery. He opened the door on the landing and descended the stairs. He was not more than half-way down when, wishing to put on his hat, he discovered that he had not his own, but a shabby thing without a cord or a lining, which someone had put in place of his beautiful plumed hat.

"Ah, by Heavens, this is too much!" cried Dubourg, remounting the staircase. "Not content with stealing my money, they will steal my hat, too, the villains! Ah, you counts and chevaliers, we'll see about that!"

Dubourg rang with violence. No one answered. He rang again, and beat against the door with his hands and feet. At last it was opened.

"What do you want?" demanded brusquely the footman in livery.

"What do I want? Why, my hat, which your

chevalier of I don't know where has taken in place of this wretched old opera hat."

"There is no hat here."

"What, you rascal! Do you dare to say that?"

"Silence, monsieur; don't make so much noise here in the house; it displeases Madame la Marquise."

"Go to the devil with your Marquise, who lets herself be pinched in the back in order to ruin people! I will go in! I know how to make them give me my hat!"

"You will not get in! Here — here, friends! Here's a fellow who wants to make trouble!"

The other three men ran down. They seized Dubourg by the shoulders. He struggled in vain; he was not so strong as they. They pushed him down the staircase, while Dubourg shouted abuse at them, called them fools and rascals as well as their masters. The four big fellows said nothing, but pushed him into the street and shut the door of the house in his face.

"Ah, the rascals!" cried Dubourg, pulling on his coat, which he had almost lost also in the struggle. "Ah, the villains! What a sweet evening I have had there! Ugh! I'll pick up stones and break the windows. But no: I will call out; the patrol will pass presently."

He waited a few moments in the street, undecided what he should do. But it was very late; the street was deserted. If he stayed there he ran

the risk of being arrested himself. He reflected that he was a stranger in the city, and that he bore a title which did not belong to him. All these reasons counselled him to wait until the next day to try to obtain justice from Madame la Marquise. While waiting he had better find his way back to the hotel.

But how could he present himself to Frederic and to Ménard, after having lost all the money they had entrusted to him? He had no more, and they owed the hotel a large sum.

Dubourg struck himself and beat himself with his fist as he returned through the streets of Lyons. At last he arrived at their hotel, where he stopped and talked soberly to himself in this fashion: "I always end by consoling myself. If I pass the night in the street and beat myself, that will not put a penny in my purse; therefore, I will go to bed, and tomorrow I will find a way out of this."

CHAPTER VIII

SISTER ANNE APPEARS

FREDERIC, on his return to the hotel in the evening, had discovered M. Ménard seated before the remains of a chicken with cresses, with which the former tutor had very agreeably passed the greater part of his evening. Somewhat astonished at not seeing Dubourg, the young count asked M. Ménard what had become of their friend, and received from the latter the amazing information that Monsieur le Baron had gone to spend the evening at one of the grandest houses of the town, the owners of which were noble and wealthy people who had sent their companion a special invitation.

That Dubourg should be invited out in Lyons, where he knew nobody, appeared extremely singular to Frederic, who feared that this entrance into aristocratic circles at one of the finest and most exclusive mansions of the city could only be another of the romantic stories invented by his friend to bewilder and mystify M. Ménard. The young man was, however, very careful not to communicate his suspicions as to the truth of the story to the credulous old tutor, and con-

tented himself with remarking that they would pursue their journey on the morrow.

"His excellency, the Baron, is in no hurry to go," said Ménard. "He likes it very much at Lyons."

"And this morning he was urging me to go on."

"The invitation he received may have changed his plans."

"His excellency, the Baron, may say what he pleases; we will go tomorrow."

Ménard made no reply and went to bed, but reflected that his pupil was rather free with a man like the Baron. Frederic retired also, although he was somewhat disturbed at the absence of Dubourg.

The next day the young count and Ménard met early in the room where they usually took breakfast. But Dubourg did not appear.

"Did he not return last night?" asked Frederic.

"Pardon me, monsieur," said one of the hotel attendants, "his excellency, the Baron, came back about three o'clock this morning. He seemed very tired; he is still in bed."

"How foolish to be up all night when we leave today! But where the devil has he been? Go and tell him that we are waiting for him."

The time passed. The waiter returned with the information that the Baron was ill and could not rise.

"The rascal was drunk yesterday," said Frederic to himself, and, followed by Ménard, who began by rubbing his temples and nose with vinegar as a precautionary measure against infection, he went to Dubourg's chamber.

They found him in bed. He had pulled his nightcap over his eyes, and had tied his handkerchief over it; and he gave to his face such a piteous expression that one would have believed on seeing him that he had suffered and languished for three months in bed.

Ménard paused in the middle of the room, applying to his nose an enormous flask of vinegar, as he said in a low tone to Frederic, —

"My God! how changed he is already!"

"What is the matter, my poor Dubourg?" exclaimed Frederic, approaching the bed and taking the hand of the sick man, who had employed every known means to give himself a fever, or the appearance of one.

"Alas, my dear fellow, I am afraid I am very ill!"

"What has caused your illness?"

"Oh, it is a terrible thing! It is the result of a dreadful adventure, it is the shock I received which has caused me to —"

"First of all we must have a doctor."

"I will go and get one, and an apothecary also," cried Ménard, who felt that he must get a breath of fresh air.

"No, no, dear Monsieur Ménard ; I don't like doctors ; and we have time enough. Hippocrates himself has said, 'Vita brevis, ars longa, experientia fallax.'"

"Yes, Baron ; but later Hippocrates also said —"

"Oh, please let Hippocrates alone!" cried Frederic, who began to read in Dubourg's eyes that he was not so ill as he would like to appear. "And if you don't want a doctor, tell me at least the cause of your illness, and your terrible adventure."

"Yes," said Ménard, taking care to seat himself as far as possible from the bed, and so that he could get the air from the door. "Let me know soon if it is contagious."

Dubourg sat up in bed ; he lifted his eyes to Heaven, pulled his nightcap as far as possible over his eyes, emitted some plaintive groans, and at length, in the most mournful tones, began his recital.

"The honorable M. Ménard heard me say yesterday, dear Count, that I had received a letter of invitation from one of the first families of the city. At least that is what my landlady assured me, and certainly without that —"

"Yes, they told me that. Go on, go on ; explain yourself," said Frederic, impatient over Dubourg's roundabout way of beginning his story.

"Softly, dear Frederic ; I am not in a state to

hurry so. I went away in a carriage last evening, after having dressed with a great deal of care."

"Yes; I saw that you had taken one of my coats."

"You know well that I lost my wardrobe in my coach."

"Yes, after —"

"I don't know by what fatality it happened that exactly in the pocket of your coat I had the pocketbook which contained all our fortune."

"Ah, that sounds bad," said Frederic, under his breath; while Ménard, much disturbed, began to draw his chair nearer. "Well, well! Go on!"

"Oh, yes, monsieur! Yes, Baron!"

"Well — well, dear, dear friends — when I left this brilliant circle, where I had been so beautifully entertained, and where I had stayed a little too late, indeed, I found my carriage gone. I was alone in a street which I did not know. All at once four robbers sprang upon me. Alas! I had no arms. I defended myself like a lion, but it was in vain. They beat me, they pushed me, and threw me to the earth; and, what is worse, they robbed me of all that I had upon me!"

"O my God! and you had our money!" cried Ménard.

"I had it all!"

"And your own fifteen thousand francs!"

"All, all, I tell you! There is nothing left except what you have with you. They have taken

even my superb hat, of which the cord alone cost sixty francs."

"What a catastrophe! And what shall we do now?" asked Ménard, who was filled with anguish to realize that, having lived as seigneurs, they might find themselves reduced to expedients.

Frederic said nothing. He suspected Dubourg's story. His friend saw this, and endeavored to convince him by renewed exclamations of the most tragic sort.

"What a catastrophe! To be attacked, to be robbed! Such horrors are only for me."

"Indeed, dear Baron, it seems that you are not fortunate," remarked Ménard, remembering the loss of the coach.

"And with whom did you pass the evening?" asked Frederic.

"With Madame the Marquise de Versac."

"With Madame de Versac! But that is very singular. I was yesterday at her country house."

"You have seen her? What! do you know her?" cried Dubourg, in a voice which was no longer that of a sick man.

"Madame de Versac visited my father occasionally while she was in Paris last year. During the summer she lives in her country house. Yesterday I saw her, I tell you. She reproved me very amiably because I had not visited in the country with her, and I am sure she has not returned to the city."

"O my God! what are you telling me? How old is this marquise?"

"She is about twenty-eight. Her city house is on Bellecour Square."

"Oh, thousand cigars! It was a contraband marquise! Triple fool that I was, not to see through it!"

Dubourg rose. He sprang from his bed, and rolling himself on his blankets, tore off his night-cap and threw it on the floor.

"The Baron is delirious!" Ménard exclaimed. "I will run for an apothecary."

The tutor hurried away. Frederic was not vexed at that, for it gave him an opportunity to find out the real truth from Dubourg; but the Baron was not in the humor for explanations, and for some moments he could not restrain himself. He was furious at the so-called counts and chevaliers.

He dressed in haste, swearing that he would find his baron with the trinkets, his shabby chevalier and his count with the frills. Then he swore also that he would break the last tooth in the Baroness' head, that he would box the Viscountess' ears and flog the Marquise.

At last Frederic made himself heard.

"Did you gamble yesterday, you unlucky dog? And is that where our money has gone?"

"Ah, dear friend, beat me, kill me! I know that I am simply a beast. But really, you would

have done the same in my place. How could she dare to use a respectable name so! I went in all confidence. I dreamed of making a fortunate marriage. All about me I heard people talking of nothing but 'my estates,' 'my château,' 'my servants,' 'my millions,' as I would say 'my coat' and 'my hat'; and they overwhelmed me with attentions — and liquors! I should have suspected that it was all wrong, but how could I? You see I am not accustomed to grand society, to fine people. When the Marquise pressed my foot, I supposed that was a custom of the nobility; and when another woman used bad grammar, I could not tell that it was not a German accent. They gambled. I confess that I love play, and they stole all I had, even to my hat. But it shall not end that way!"

"Where are you going?" said Frederic, trying to hold Dubourg, who seized his opera hat to go out.

"Let me go! let me go! I want to find those scoundrels, and perhaps — Wait for me here."

Dubourg opened the door just as Ménard entered with a young apothecary, whose hands were full of calming potions. Dubourg brushed hastily passed Ménard, who tried to stop him, and rushed down the stairs four steps at a time. The tutor fell against the apothecary, and he tumbled flat with all his potions.

"Run after him! catch him!" cried Ménard, for he believed that Dubourg was burning with

fever. Frederic could hardly persuade him to send away the apothecary, assuring him that the Baron was much better.

Dubourg hastened to the house of his false marquise, having fortunately kept the number. He must go on foot now, and could no longer give himself the airs of a grand seigneur. The lorgnette was not at all appropriate with the old opera hat, which did not more than half cover Dubourg's head. But at that moment he was not thinking of his appearance, for he was absorbed wholly in the thought of recovering his money.

He soon reached the house where he had been the evening before. He recognized it easily, and as he had made his plans during the night he entered the passage boldly, finding the door open. He mounted the stairs, listened, looked about him and heard nothing. He rang the bell of the apartment, from which he had been so rudely sent away the night before, but no one answered. He rang several times with more violence. Finally the bell wire broke in his hand, but no one opened the door.

"Open, cheats, rascals," cried Dubourg, "or I will bring the police!" and he shook the door. An old woman appeared on the landing of the next story and asked why he made such a noise.

"I want to speak to the people who live in this apartment," replied Dubourg.



"Oh, there is no one living there, monsieur. I rented it furnished to a woman who went away before daylight."

Dubourg was petrified. He saw that there was no more hope of getting his money back. He returned slowly and sorrowfully to the hotel, and met Frederic and Ménard with an air of consternation.

"Well, what about the thieves?" asked Frederic.

"Oh, my friend, they have escaped already."

"I was sure of it."

"At least, Baron, you have left word with the police."

"Monsieur Ménard, I have done everything that can be done; but I am afraid we must say farewell to our money."

"And what are we to do now?"

"That is what we must think of. How much money have you, Monsieur Ménard?"

"Two louis; not more."

"And you, Frederic?"

"I have about ten."

"That is not even enough to pay our landlord, whom we must owe about a hundred crowns."

"What! Is that not paid?"

"Do you suppose they would ask people like us to pay in advance?"

"And such a bill!"

"Well, we must live; and what does it matter



whether it is a hundred francs or a hundred crowns, if we can't pay?"

"But we can't leave the hotel without paying our bill, and we cannot travel farther without money."

"It is rather a difficult problem," said Ménard.

"I only see one thing to do," said Dubourg, "and that is to write to the Count of Montreville for money. He certainly will not leave his son in embarrassment."

"Ask money of the Count! And it is not three months since we left Paris!" sighed Ménard. "If the Baron would write to his steward of Rava or Krapach, how would that be?"

"Ah, I will write gladly, but it is so far. It will take at least two months to get a reply, because at this time the avalanches are a great hindrance to the couriers."

"In summer, Baron?"

"Certainly; it is in summer that the snows melt. Good Lord, if it were winter you could skate half the way. We could not wait all that time in this hotel. We must have money immediately."

"Dear Ménard," said Frederic, "it is absolutely necessary to write to my father."

"I shall tell him the misfortune that has come to his excellency, the Baron."

"No, no! You are the one to whom he confided the funds. It is you who have been robbed.

It is of no use to mention me. Imagine that you were out last night and were robbed."

"Go on, dear Ménard; write my father a very pathetic letter."

"The devil! It is very difficult."

"I will dictate one to you, if you wish."

Ménard took the pen and Dubourg dictated to him the following letter:—

Monsieur le Comte,—I have the honor to inform you of our happy arrival at Lyons, and also of the misfortune we have experienced. As I returned to the hotel this evening, I was attacked by thieves and robbed of all we possess. This has placed us in a very embarrassing position, from which we pray you to relieve us as soon as possible. Let me add that your son bears himself like *Æsculapius*, and the journey seems to have been of great benefit to him. He charges me to present to you his most sincere respects.

Ménard signed this letter, and Dubourg wished Frederic to add to it some very tender words. Frederic, however, had never lied to his father, and he preferred to say nothing rather than make any effort to impose upon his good faith.

The letter was consigned to the post, and they must await his reply. Fortunately, their landlord did not seem in the least troubled. They had a carriage and horses, which would at the worst be more than sufficient to pay him. That reassured Frederic, but he nevertheless begged his companions to make their table less expensive. Dubourg did not think this would be wise; he was

certain it would arouse the suspicions of their host, and Ménard agreed with the Baron.

Frederic resumed his walks and meditations, but Dubourg did not return to his promenades with Ménard. After he had displayed his elegant figure in the streets of Lyons and played the palatine, he did not care to show himself in his old opera hat, and with a long face. He felt as if everyone would suspect that he had not a penny. There are many people who owe their assurance and their self-confidence to the gold which they have in their pockets, and this alone gives them their aplomb.

Dubourg passed his days in philosophizing with Ménard, who was not a philosopher, but who listened with respect to the Baron, and considered him very wise. He was not, however, so delighted as formerly to be the Baron's travelling companion, because when he recalled their adventures since the Baron threw them into a ditch in the collision with his coach, he saw that the Baron carried with him a certain evil destiny, of which they had already experienced the effect.

At the end of ten days they received an answer from the Count. It was addressed to M. Ménard, but it was Frederic who tremblingly broke the seal.

"Look, first, and see what he has sent," said Dubourg.

They found an order for six thousand francs upon a Lyons banker.

"Good!" said Dubourg. "Now we have something with which to support the reproaches of a father. See what he says."

Monsieur de Montreville wrote to Monsieur Ménard only these words:—

I do not believe in the least the story of the robbers which you have told me. But I prefer to pardon my son's first folly. I hope, however, that it will make him wiser. I send you more money, but do not count upon such indulgence again.

"He did not believe us," said Frederic.

"I am afraid that he is angry," remarked Ménard.

"Never mind; he will get over it. We will travel henceforth like three little painted loves. We will be wise, we will be settled, philosophic; but that need not prevent our being well fed, for good nourishment is necessary to health—is it not, M. Ménard?"

"Credo equidem, Baron."

"But no more luxury, no more display. I will return to my incognito."

"What, Baron!"

"Yes, Monsieur Ménard; besides, with six thousand francs we could not play the fine gentleman very long—I mean keep our rank."

"But, Baron, when you have received a reply from Rava and Krapach—"

"Ah, that will be different; but I am afraid that we may have to wait a long time. As to the funds, I think we had better put them in charge

of Frederic. He is more calm, has more presence of mind. Those are the qualities a cashier needs."

"It is a pity!" murmured Ménard under his breath. "We lived so nobly when the Baron paid!"

When all their arrangements had been completed they settled their account at the hotel. For the three weeks they had lived at the hotel they paid eight hundred and fifty francs, which made quite a hole in the Count's enclosure; but during this time they had lived like gentlemen. Dubourg regretted deeply that he could not keep up the same magnificent style, Ménard sighed over the fine dinners he had eaten, and Frederic said softly to Dubourg, —

"Dear friend, if we go so fast we cannot go so far."

They sold the Count's horses, and arranged with a driver to take them out of Lyons.

"The two stops we have made have cost you pretty dear, Baron," said Ménard; "a coach and fifty thousand francs the first time, and fifteen thousand the second. You couldn't travel very long at that rate."

"But now I am relieved of all worry, Monsieur Ménard. I defy anyone to rob me. Socrates always found his house large enough to receive his friends; as for me, I find my purse full enough when Frederic pays for me."

M. Ménard could say nothing in reply. The comparison did not seem to him very happy.

Instead of taking the route to Turin, Frederic decided to go to Grenoble. He wished to visit this city and its surroundings, and longed especially to see the Chartreuse, the savage aspect of which fills the traveller with astonishment and even fear. Dubourg was in no hurry to reach Italy, and did not care in which direction he went. Indeed, since his last escapade, he did not permit himself to advise his friends. As to Ménard, he was always submissive to the wishes of Frederic; but the very name of the Chartreuse made him tremble. He feared that his pupil might wish to enter some hermitage, and he had no taste for a frugal and retired life.

Along the banks of the Isère the country becomes more picturesque, more mountainous and imposing. Clumps of wood vary the monotony of the prairies; the brooks, after having watered the plains, break into cascades and waterfalls among the mountainous rocks. The noisy neighborhoods of Paris are far away, and also the delicious scenery and views along the banks of the Rhône. The picture has become more serious, more majestic perhaps. It inspires the soul to sweet reverie, and transports the observer far from the city, of which you no longer hear the tumult.

"How much this country pleases me!" said Frederic. "I find in it a subtle charm which

appeals to my heart as well as to my eyes. How sweet it is to wander beneath these shades !”

“To dream of Madame Dernange ! Is it not so ?”

“Oh, no, Dubourg. I assure you it is a long time since she has been in my thoughts. I have forgotten her and all the coquettes that I knew in Paris.”

“Well, then, whom are you dreaming of in these long solitary walks ?”

“Alas ! I cannot tell. I dream of a being I do not know ; of a sweet woman, tender, loving, but especially faithful.”

“And do you look for her on the banks of the brooks ?”

“I am not seeking her. I believe I shall meet her unexpectedly ; that chance will bring her to me.”

“If this chance should come only once in thirty years, you will both of you be a little mature before it happens.”

“Ah, Dubourg, you make me very impatient. You have no idea of love.”

“My friend, it is only a doll, which each one dresses according to his fashion. Is it not so, Monsieur Ménard ?”

“Baron, I cannot answer ad rem.”

They arrived at Grenoble, where they sent away the postilion. Their arrangements here were quite different from those at Lyons ; but, although

the hotel was less luxurious, the table was excellent. The poultry was abundant, and the wines of fine vintage. M. Ménard and Dubourg were well content.

The day of their arrival Frederic and his two companions set forth on a little tour to visit the Chartreuse. Dubourg no longer played the fine gentleman, and enjoyed being with his friend rather than with M. Ménard. The tutor decided to accompany them, although he was not a good walker, Frederic preferring to make the journey on foot, for the sake of enjoying the landscape.

The travellers arrived at the Chartreuse after a journey of nearly half a day, over mountains covered with pines, through fertile valleys, prairies and rich pastures. The route through Fourvoyerie follows a road cut in the rock, skirting on the left a torrent; while on the right a rock rears itself sixty feet into the air. A new sentiment is experienced at the aspect of this savage spectacle, and one is lost in a mingling of admiration and terror. One stops to look closely at the rock of the Needle, which is near the gate of the Grande-Chartreuse.

Frederic wondered, Dubourg looked and Ménard sighed; but the hospitable reception which the travellers received at the Chartreuse reanimated the spirits of the poor tutor. He confessed that this country offered admirable views; but he felt, nevertheless, that he preferred his little apartment

on the fourth story Rue Bétisy, to the most picturesque cell of the Chartreuse, in which he would always be hungry.

It is not possible for everyone to enjoy the beauties of nature, and it was with infinite pleasure that Ménard turned his back upon Chartreuse to return to Grenoble, although Frederic proposed to him to sleep at the monastery, so as not to be too wearied by the journey. Ménard assured him he was not tired, that the five leagues did not frighten him in the least; so they took the road again after dinner.

The sun was almost setting, and our travellers were still four leagues from Grenoble, because Frederic paused every little while to call his friend's attention to a valley, a mill or a landscape. Each time Frederic stopped Ménard sat down upon the grass, and they had a great deal of trouble to put him on his feet again. The good man was not much of a walker; but he recalled his courage, and took the liberty of leaning upon the arm of his excellency the Baron, who was the best fellow in the world when he was not giving himself the airs of a palatine. The sound of rustic music attracted Frederic's attention.

"Come on!" he cried; "let us go down on this side. I see some villagers dancing below; let us enjoy the picture of their pleasure."

"Come on!" cried Dubourg; "there must be some pretty girls down there."

"Come on!" added Ménard; "we will rest and refresh ourselves."

The travellers descended a hill and were soon in a valley bordered by oaks and firs. They found there a great crowd of people, who had come from a village at the other side of the valley. It was the festival of the neighborhood, which the peasants celebrated by enthusiastic dancing. A bagpipe and tambourine formed the entire orchestra, but it was enough to set them jumping. Joy shone in all the faces. The girls wore their choicest ornaments, and the picturesque costume of the village women of this district in itself made them very attractive.

Ménard seated himself at a table and asked for refreshments. Dubourg mingled with the dancers, saying sweet things to the prettiest peasant girls. Frederic watched the picture presented for some time, then wandered away from the crowd and the dance, and followed the banks of a brook which wound into a clump of willows, at the entrance of a thick wood.

He went so far that the rustic music of the bagpipes sounded faintly in his ears. He was about to rejoin his companions, when, turning his head, he saw, a few steps from him, a young girl sitting upon the brookside. Her eyes were turned towards the valley with an expression of enchanting sweetness. She smiled at the dance, which she looked at from afar; but there was a melancholy in

her smile which seemed habitual. The young girl was about sixteen years old. Her dress indicated poverty, but her grace and sweetness forbade any suggestion of the misery associated with it. Beautiful golden hair clustered in ringlets about her lovely forehead. It was a brow which promised candor and strength. Her features were fine and delicate, her mouth was gentle and gracious ; and her eyes, of a tender blue, had in them a touching expression of sweetness and sensitive feeling which appeared deepened by the pallor of her cheeks.

Frederic paused. He looked at the young girl. He could not take his eyes from her. Why is she alone upon the banks of the brook while her companions are rejoicing in pleasure and the dance, and why does her face wear such a sorrowful expression? Frederic had only just seen her, but already he was deeply interested in her. He was anxious to know everything which concerned her, and to share in his own heart the sorrows which distressed her.

At that moment several young couples from the village passed near, on their way to the dance. Frederic addressed some of the girls, pointing to the little figure seated on the bank.

"Who is that sweet child?" he asked, "and why does she not join in your pleasure?"

The villagers stopped, and glanced at the young girl with pity and evident sympathy ; then turning to Frederic they said, —

"Oh, monsieur, the poor little thing can't dance. It is Sister Anne."

Frederic was astonished, and waited for an explanation; but the young people went on to the dance, merely repeating in a sorrowful tone, "It is Sister Anne."

CHAPTER IX

WHAT IS SHE DOING THERE? THE VILLAGE DANCE

THE villagers had departed, but Frederic remained immersed in thought under the willows, through which the last rays of the setting sun feebly penetrated. He was still looking at the little girl who did not see him, because, since there were no longer any dancers to look at, she sat with bowed head and saw only the stream which sparkled at her feet. What meant the village girls by those words: "It is Sister Anne. Poor little thing! she cannot dance?"

The tone of pity in which the words were uttered had made a deep impression upon Frederic. What sorrows, what cause, could prevent this pretty girl from participating in the amusements and pleasures natural to her age? Although a gentle melancholy subdued her charming features, she did not seem disturbed by a recent sorrow; on the contrary, she was calm and tranquil, she smiled at the brook that murmured before her, and surely her soul was as pure as the water that reflected her image.

A mystery evidently shadowed the young girl's

destiny, and Frederic yearned to pierce its depths. He could no longer be indifferent to anything which concerned Sister Anne.

He advanced softly. He was very near her, and she had not lifted her eyes.

"And why," exclaimed Frederic, "why don't you join your companions? They are dancing only a little way from you,—why do you stay here in this lonely place?"

At the sound of Frederic's voice the young girl turned her head and started with fright, but she was immediately reassured by the gentle tone in which he spoke to her. She was no longer alarmed, but rose and left the bank of the stream. "Have you had some great misfortune, some sorrow? Surely you are too young to know much of trouble. Ah, if I could help you in any way it would make me very happy."

The young girl cast upon Frederic a glance of mingled sorrow and gratitude. She fixed her beautiful eyes upon his for a moment, then making him a graceful little courtesy she prepared to withdraw. He took her hand gently, however, and detained her. She was astonished, half frightened again, and withdrew her hand from that of the young man, who had pressed it warmly.

"You are going," said Frederic; "you fly, and without answering me, without deigning to speak to me."

The eyes of the young girl became doubly

expressive; a sentiment of indescribable sorrow animated them. Presently the tears filled them, and ran down her pale, almost colorless cheeks.

"Good God! you are crying! There must be a cause for that!" cried Frederic, seizing anew the poor child's hand. She made a sign as if to indicate that it was not his fault. A little smile pierced through her tears, but she forcibly disengaged her hand and ran into the darkness of the thick woods. She was as light as a fawn, and disappeared immediately from Frederic's eyes.

He started after her for a few steps, but it was already dark, and he could not see which way she had gone. He returned to the borders of the brook and paused in the spot where she had been sitting.

Frederic could not have explained what had happened to him, but he felt a sentiment for this strange young girl more vivid, more tender, and far sweeter than anything he had previously experienced.

As she disappeared from view his heart beat tumultuously. It seemed to him that she was already very dear to him, that she was not a stranger.

What grace, what charm, she possessed! But why this silence and sadness? They called her Sister Anne. What did they mean by the title? Did she belong to some religious order? But no, that could not be possible; for her dress did not

indicate anything of that sort, and it was evident that she went freely through the country. Still there was something mysterious about her.

"Charming girl! Oh, I will know everything about you, all that concerns you," murmured Frederic, looking eagerly toward the wood where she had disappeared. "I will see you again; I will comfort you in your sorrow. I know that I love you already. Oh, I love you, not like those coquettes who have deceived me, but as you ought to be loved! I read only candor and innocence in your eyes. Ah, if you would love me sometime I should be very happy."

Night had fallen, and he must seek his companions. Frederic left regretfully the willows where he had seen Sister Anne, but as he returned to the valley he said to himself repeatedly, —

"I shall see her again; I must see her again. I shall not speak of her to Dubourg. He would only mock at me. He believes that all women are the same. He has no idea of real love. Poor little thing! I wonder why you could not dance with the other girls."

The dancers were very gay, the villagers giving themselves up joyously to the pleasure. Their faces reflected the frolic and happiness of the moment. The songs of the drinkers mingled with the notes of the tambourine and the bagpipes. The young men pressed the hands of their partners in the dance, the young girls smiled

upon their lovers, the mothers upon their babies, and the old men upon their bottles. Each one smiled at what he loved, as if to give thanks for the happiness love brought him.

Ménard, who was seated between two intrepid drinkers, listened tranquilly to the history of the country while he ate a salad. He gossiped freely with his neighbors, for in the village, pride was forgotten and distinction of rank disappeared. Ménard would never, under any circumstances, allow pride to interfere with his appetite.

Dubourg, forgetting his titles of nobility, joined eagerly in the dance. His partner was a pretty brunette, with sparkling eyes, a turned-up nose and a very fine figure. The country girl was not in the least frightened at dancing with the fine gentleman.

She jumped higher than ever, and continually cried to her partner, "Go on! go on! You're too slow!"

Dubourg danced in the Paris fashion, with the short, slow steps which the drawing-room circle pronounced graceful and perfect. But the villagers thought this was no better than walking about. The young girl wished her cavalier to have more spirit.

"Can't you dance any better than that? What do you call that dance, anyway? Oh, jump a little, or I'll get another partner!"

Dubourg did not wish her to take another

partner, so he made a magnetic battery of his arms and legs, and sparkled all over with movement and energy.

Ménard looked on from his table, saw how Dubourg was dancing, and said to his neighbors,—

“See there! His excellency the Baron is dancing a polonaise with those young girls. Look, friends! That is the way they dance in Cracovia and on the Krapach Mountains. How noble that is! how graceful! What pretty steps he takes *per fas et nefas!*”

Ménard’s companions opened their eyes wide and had no idea what he meant. But the brunette was satisfied with Dubourg; and he, seeing she was in an excellent humor, ventured to take a kiss. She responded unexpectedly with a vigorous box on the ears, for the village maidens of the neighborhood of Grenoble are not like the Gotons in the neighborhood of Paris.

Frederic was looking on at the dance, but he saw nothing of the animated tableau which passed before his eyes. His thoughts were still in the solitary wood, and he was gazing at the young girl seated on the border of the brook.

Dubourg approached him. He had quitted his partner because he saw that he would get nothing from her but laughter, jumping and noise; and the blow she gave him in exchange for his slight liberties had calmed his ardor for the dance.

"Where have you been?" said he to Frederic.
"You left us in the midst of the fun."

"I have been taking a little walk."

"What an insatiable walker you are! But I believe it is time we walked towards Grenoble—is it not? We are nearly four leagues from there."

They rejoined Ménard, and he complimented Dubourg upon his manner of dancing. Frederic asked what was the shortest route, and a young villager offered his services as guide for a part of the way. Ménard did not seem able to walk four leagues, and even Dubourg was dismayed at the length of the route before them. The villager offered his carthorse, on condition that they should not go faster than a walk. The horse was accepted gratefully by Dubourg and Ménard, and the tutor mounted and held on tight behind the Baron. Frederic was to walk ahead with the young villager. They set forth.

The landscape floated in fairy moonlight. The night was superb. On the left of the travellers huge forests of firs were piled in majestic shadow. There was no sound save that of the blacksmith's hammer, which seemed to intensify the silence of the night. When they passed near a forge a sudden brilliance replaced for a moment the bluish radiance of the moon, and cast the glint of fire into the soft stillness of the night. The voices of the workers were heard, mingled with the blows of a hammer. Dubourg said to Ménard,—

"Do you hear the Cyclops working at Jupiter's forge?"

And Ménard replied,—

"I wouldn't trust myself alone at night with those fellows for all the gold of Peru."

He gave a little kick to their charger as he spoke, but it went no faster for the blow. Dubourg and the tutor were a little in the rear because the carthorse could make but slow progress over the road, which was very rough and stony. Frederic went on ahead with the guide. He was only a little fellow of twelve years, frank and innocent, like almost all the mountaineers.

"What is the village we have just left?" asked Frederic.

"It is Vizille, monsieur. It is the prettiest village near Grenoble."

"Do you live there?"

"Yes, monsieur; I was born there."

"And do you know—"

Before completing the sentence Frederic turned to see if his companions could hear what was said, but they were fully fifty feet behind. Dubourg was talking of Brittany, and describing to Ménard some points in the manner of life there. Frederic saw that he could chat with his guide with no fear of being overheard.

"Do you know in the village a young girl who is called Sister Anne?"

"Sister Anne? Oh, yes, monsieur; of course I

know her. She does not live exactly in the village, but her cottage is not far from there. Poor Sister Anne! Who doesn't know her in our country?"

"Ah! You are sorry for her too? What is there so unfortunate about this girl?"

"I think she is to be pitied; she has such a sad story."

"You know it?"

"Yes, monsieur. My mother has told me about it many times. Everybody in our country knows it."

"Tell me the story. Tell me all you know about Sister Anne. Speak, my boy, and be sure you forget nothing."

As he said this Frederic slipped a coin into the child's hand. He was surprised at being paid for such a simple thing as telling a story, and began his recital with much spirit. Frederic pressed closer to him, and lost not a single word.

CHAPTER X

THE STORY OF SISTER ANNE

"SISTER ANNE, monsieur, is the daughter of a lady who was called Clotilda, and who was, so they say, very charming and very pretty. This Clotilda was born of very rich parents, and was not brought up like a simple country girl; she was very talented and possessed many accomplishments; but for all that, she came with her husband to live in our little village among plain hard-working people.

"People said that her marriage was a love match, and that the beautiful Clotilda had preferred life in a cottage with the man she loved rather than to dwell in a fine mansion as the wife of another and a wealthier man.

"However that may be, Clotilda and her husband lived very harmoniously in our village for a long time, and the good God sent them children to complete their happiness; first, a little daughter, Anne, who was from the first quite as pretty as her mother. Perhaps you have seen her, monsieur.

"Four years afterwards they had another child. This was a boy. The parents were happy over

it, and little Anne never left her brother for a moment. Soon these poor people were overwhelmed with misfortunes. A storm devastated their fields and they lost their entire harvest; then poor Clotilda fell ill; and her husband could think of nothing to do in order to save his wife and children from dying of starvation, but to enlist as a substitute. He sold himself, gave all the money to his wife, and left her, saying, 'Take care of our poor children.'

"The anguish of her husband's departure deprived Clotilda of her remaining strength, and she was for a long while unable to do anything for her little household. During this time little Anne took the entire care of her baby brother, who loved her with all his heart. Her mother often said to her, —

" 'Take good care of your brother. Alas! perhaps there will very soon be no one else to watch over him.'

"A year rolled by. At first Clotilda's husband wrote often, then suddenly his letters ceased. There had been a battle — at that time there were many battles, and poor Clotilda's husband was among the slain. They received the news in the neighborhood, but no one had the courage to tell the poor woman, and she looked for a letter from her husband and expected his return when he had long been dead.

"She went every day to the top of a high

mountain, from which she could see for miles around the village. She hoped thus to catch the first glimpse of her husband. Often she passed entire days sitting under a tree, her eyes fixed upon the road where she had seen her husband for the last time. When the villagers saw Clotilda there they tried to console her; they spoke to her of her children, but she said sorrowfully, 'Anne is with her brother; she never leaves him; she will be a second mother to him.'

"The young girl was not yet seven years old, but she surprised everyone by her willingness and her tender care for her brother. The poor little fellow saw no one but his sister the greater part of the day, but he lacked for nothing. His sister Anne rocked him, dressed him, petted him, and tried to foresee his slightest wishes. The name of 'Sister Anne' was the first that the baby lisped, and soon everyone in the village called her that. All spoke of her as a model of sisterly love and kindness, and she is still called 'Sister Anne.'

"One day Clotilda had gone out as usual to take her accustomed watch, and Sister Anne was alone in the cottage with her brother. At the hour when the mother returned, as a rule, she did not come. The little boy continued to play with his sister; but she was disturbed, and looked constantly down the road, saying, 'Where is mamma? Why doesn't mamma come?'

"The night fell, and Clotilda was not at home.

If Anne had been alone she would have run to the village, through the fields and woods, to find her mother; but how could she leave her brother? That was impossible for her. He was a treasure confided to her, and she must not leave him for an instant.

“The poor child decided to put her brother to bed, for he was only three years old, and was sleepy and tired. She would watch beside him until her mother came; and when would that be? The time rolled on; each moment doubled the child’s anguish. Her bosom heaved, great tears fell from her eyes, and she sobbed again and again, ‘Where is mamma? Where is mamma? O God! has she abandoned us?’

“As if to increase her terrors, a frightful storm broke over the village. The thunder rolled in great peals. Sister Anne was dreadfully frightened. She buried her head in the covers of her little brother’s bed, and called on her mother for help.

“All at once the lightning struck with a terrific noise, which resounded through all the village. Sister Anne was stunned by the violence of the shock, and for some time dared not open her eyes. When she looked about her a thick smoke enveloped the cottage. The poor little thing tried in vain to discover what was the cause of the cloud that surrounded her. Each moment the smoke increased. Anne ran to the window. The flames covered it from without, and closed the

passage for her. Alas ! the lightning had struck the roof of the cottage ; it had taken fire, and on every side the poor children were walled in by the flames.

“ The young girl thought only of her brother. She ran to his cradle, took him in her arms, and looked on all sides, shrieking terribly. But, alas ! the danger increased. She lost her strength ; the smoke strangled her ; she could call no more ; she was utterly exhausted.

“ You can easily imagine, monsieur, that everybody in the village ran to the cottage. It was no longer possible to save the house, but the children could be rescued. They succeeded at last, after many perils, in entering the chamber of Sister Anne. They found her hidden with her brother under her mother’s bed, the little fellow pressed close to her breast, determined to save him from death ; but, alas ! it was useless, the child was already dead. Sister Anne had only fainted, and they succeeded in recalling her to life. But imagine, monsieur, the sorrow and astonishment of everyone when it was found that the terrible experience she had passed through had deprived her of speech ; she opened her lips and only confused cries issued from them. Since that day the poor child has been unable to utter a word.”

“ Great God ! ” exclaimed Frederic. “ Poor girl ! Is that the cause of that strange melancholy which is seen in her charming face ? ”

"Yes, monsieur," continued the young guide. "Sister Anne is dumb. All that has been done to restore her speech has been useless. The physicians said that the despair of seeing her brother die without being able to save him deprived her of all power of expression, and that perhaps a similar shock would restore speech to her. The poor little thing has kept a heart sensitive enough to feel everything, and she has not forgotten any of her sufferings. She has wept during all these years for her mother and her brother. Poor Clotilda had yielded to her grief, and they found her lifeless at the foot of the tree on top of the mountain, where she was accustomed to watch for her husband, on the same night that was so fatal to her children.

"When the cottage was destroyed by lightning Anne was deprived of her last refuge, but the village people outdid one another in caring for the young girl. A good woman named Marguerite, who lives in a cottage in the wood adjoining the village, took Anne home with her and adopted her as her daughter.

"Marguerite was poor also, but, with the united help of the richest of the villagers, Anne was given a cow and some goats.

"For several years she was unable to devote herself to any work. She passed her days seated on the banks of the brook, or in the depths of the wood. She could not listen to anything that was

said to her, and could only weep for her parents and her brother. Time has calmed her grief a little, and she is more quiet, more resigned. She has proved herself very grateful for everything that was done for her. She works hard at all the country tasks, and shows the most tender regard for poor Marguerite, who is now so old that she does not go out of her cottage.

"Sister Anne is now just as sweet, sensitive and good as she has always been. She even smiles sometimes, but her smile is always full of sadness. At sight of a little boy as old as her brother on that fearful night Anne is excited, distressed, and tears spring to her eyes. If you have seen her, monsieur, ah, you know how pretty she is. She is sixteen now. If she does not speak, she understands everything. Her gestures are full of expression, and her eyes fairly talk. Oh, we understand her very easily. In spite of that, it is a great pity that she cannot talk, for the village women say that it would do her so much good."

"Poor little thing!" said Frederic. "Yes, it is a sad pity. How sweet her voice would be! How I should love to hear it! But I am sure that her misfortune makes her more interesting in my eyes. Did you say that she lives in the wood?"

"Yes, monsieur. Oh, it is very easy to find it, — the cottage of old Marguerite. You follow the path which goes into the willows; to the left you

see a clearing ; you descend a little hill, and then the cottage is before you."

"Thank you, my boy."

"But see, monsieur ; we are at Grenoble. You do not need me any longer."

"No, my friend. — But wait ; take this extra for your trouble."

"Thanks, monsieur ; when you have need of anyone in our village, my name is Julian, and I shall be glad to serve you."

"I shall be sure to remember you."

The two cavaliers dismounted from the horse. The young guide took their place, saluted the travellers and went off at a gentle trot. Frederic's thoughts were filled with the touching story which the little man had related with such sympathy. He walked in silence beside his two companions, who were in active discussion as they entered Grenoble. They could not decide on the best fashion of serving a duck with olives, and the dispute lasted a long time. Dubourg described the method adopted in Brittany, and Ménard fell back upon the principles he had drawn from the Royal Cookbook.

On their return to the inn each one sought repose, for the day had been fatiguing, and all were in need of rest. But Frederic found no sleep upon his couch. The charming face of the young girl filled his imagination with sweet fancies. He thought of her misfortune, and of

the pathetic story which had been told him, saying to himself, "How she loved her brother! What a tender soul! What a burning heart! How delightful to inspire such a love, to read it in her lovely eyes; for they almost supply the speech that she has lost!"

All night Frederic thought of nothing but Sister Anne. At daybreak he arose, and left his companions to enjoy the repose from which he fled. He went out from the inn, called for a horse, and galloped away on the road to the village of Vizille.

CHAPTER XI

A DAY IN THE WOOD

LOVE is the god who most agreeably charms our leisure hours. He overleaps space, he annihilates distance, he causes us to forget the flight of time. A lover never feels ennui, even though he be unhappy. Memories, plans, and hopes continually lull a love-smitten heart. One may love as well in a cottage set in the midst of the grassy fields, the overshadowing foliage, the soft mosses and feathery ferns of the country, as in the most beautiful mansion of a magnificent city. There are even those who declare that love in the country is a deeper, purer feeling; but at any rate one would expect it to be more natural and unaffected there. It is not given to the mountaineer, the woodcutter, the day laborer to enjoy the fine arts, to occupy himself with financial schemes or political matters; but it is permitted to him, as to everybody else, to experience the delights and compensations of love, and that is a very fortunate thing, indeed, for humankind. I do not remember what author it was who said, with great truth:

“I think the happiest time in the life of a man,

is that which he spends in paying court to the woman of his heart."

It is a great pity that this time is so short. Possibly it is for the sake of renewing this happiness that men fall in love so frequently. Women do not treat love so lightly; for them it is the real history of life, while for men it is only a romance.

But Frederic had reached that valley where the peasants had danced the night before, and which was now as quiet as were the adjacent neighborhoods. Some peasant women were at work here and there in the fields; in the country the pleasure of the evening does not interfere with the labor of the following day. The good people were delighted to talk over the amusements of the festival, which would not be repeated for an entire year; but the time would pass quickly for them, they knew so well how to employ it.

Frederic directed his course towards the little clump of willows. He dismounted from his horse, fastened it to a tree and disappeared in the woods. He sought the young girl on the banks of the brook, but she was not where he had seen her the evening before. He went off into the thickest part of the wood, recalled what his little guide had told him, and turned to the left. All was calm and peaceful. The thick foliage of the firs allowed scarcely a ray of sunshine to pass their heavy crowns. At length Frederic found himself in a little clearing. He ascended a hillock and



saw that he was not far from a shabby old cottage.

The wood of which this wretched hovel had been built was decayed and falling to pieces ; the straw roof was a ruin. A fence surrounded a little garden at the right of the cottage, but it had partly fallen down.

Frederic felt his heart contract at sight of this dwelling, which revealed dire poverty, and lack of the simplest necessities of life.

“It is there that she lives,” he said to himself, “and she has lived in misery and solitude there since she was seven years old. Poor little girl! Your sublime devotion, your misfortune, is worthy of the homage of mankind ; and yet you have found only this miserable cabin, where you can weep for your brother and your parents. And still you are happy, because you have not been deprived of a home and of bread.”

Frederic stood leaning against a tree, gazing at the cabin. His heart was so full that he felt himself unable to move. He could only sigh while he repeated, “She is there! She is there!”

Some moments passed. Then suddenly the door of the cottage opened ; a young girl stood upon the threshold and looked out into the wood. It was she. The melancholy of this wild spot, the sombre aspect of the woods, the poverty of the cabin,—all disappeared. The presence of the young girl instantly made the spot radiant. The

woman we love has a great power. She communicates her charm to all her surroundings. When she enters, the most frightful cavern is not terrifying, and the most savage landscape becomes delicious.

Sister Anne turned back into the cabin. She reappeared presently, leading four goats, which composed all her flock. A cow browsed in the little garden. She caressed it as she passed, and seemed to promise to return soon. The young girl drove her goats towards a hill, where there was abundance of fresh grass, walking slowly behind them. Her head was slightly bent upon her breast, and she only lifted it to see that her goats did not wander away.

Frederic remained leaning against the tree, which concealed him almost entirely, but he did not lose a single movement of Sister Anne. When she turned towards the hill he followed her softly. He burned to be near her, to speak to her; but he did not dare to appear too suddenly, lest he should frighten her. She seemed so timid, so fearful — and she might run away.

Presently she seated herself upon a little green knoll, drew from her pocket a bit of brown bread and some figs, and began to eat her breakfast. Frederic ventured to approach a little nearer. At last he was quite close, and when she turned to look after one of her goats her eyes encountered those of the young man she had seen the evening before.

The maiden started, as if more astonished than

frightened ; and in fact there was nothing in Frederic to frighten anyone. He stood erect before her, trembling and much disturbed, his glance tender and seeming to ask pardon for his intrusion. His whole expression bespoke the interest she had inspired in him.

Sister Anne started to rise, as if to go away

"Oh, please," said Frederic to her, "do not run away from me, sweet girl. I shall be very unhappy if I frighten you."

The maiden smiled, and shook her head gently, to let him know that she had no such feeling.

"I saw you last evening on the bank of the brook," continued Frederic, approaching her. Sister Anne looked at him, and bent her head, smiling a little as if to say she remembered him.

"What! you remember me? But you, sweet child, have not been out of my thoughts a moment. How could I help being struck by such grace, such charming features?"

The young girl listened to him with surprise. All that he said was new to her. Frederic seated himself upon the grass, some steps from her. This action astonished the young mute. She looked at him with a sort of fear ; but the light in his eyes warmed her heart, and reassured her very quickly. She dropped her eyes, but it was easy to read in her lovely and innocent features that she awaited with curiosity what Frederic would say next.

"When I saw you yesterday," he went on, "I felt the most tender interest in you. But how much this has increased, since I learned — Poor little girl! Ah, they told me your sad story. I know all the misfortunes that have weighed upon you!"

A new expression crossed the features of the young girl. A frightful memory seemed to agitate her. She groaned, as if trying to speak. She lifted her gaze to heaven, lowered it again to the earth, and a torrent of tears burst from her eyes.

Frederic approached her. He slipped his arm gently about Sister Anne. He took one of her hands and laid it on his heart.

"I have recalled your sorrows," he said; "forgive me. What can I do now to drive them away and make you happy? Poor child! let me dry your tears. From this moment you are not alone in this world; you have a friend. There is a heart which responds to yours, and as long as it lives it will beat for you. Anne, dear friend, will you let me love you? Will you let me share your sorrows, your anguish? Will you let me think of you constantly, and see you each day? Ah, don't refuse me this kindness, or I shall be more unhappy than you!"

Frederic spoke with warmth. Love roused him, and his voice became more tender, his eyes more than ever powerful. The young mute had listened

to him at first with surprise. A strange sentiment troubled her. She tried to draw away her hand; she had not the power to do so. Frederic had ceased speaking, but she listened still.

In an instant the consciousness of her sorrow returned to her, and destroyed the joy of this new and beautiful experience. She glanced mournfully at Frederic. Then her eyes fell more bitterly upon herself. She withdrew her hand, and repulsed Frederic, shaking her head in distress, as if she would say, "No, no! You cannot love me! I am too unhappy!"

Frederic understood her. He pressed her hand again to his heart, and pointed to the cottage.

"With you," he said, "I am sure that I could be happy if I lived in this wood."

At this moment the sound of a little bell warned Anne that old Marguerite had risen. She hastened to collect her goats, and prepared to return to the cabin.

"Are you coming back?" asked Frederic. "Ah, I wish I could see you again today."

She pointed to the sun, the rays of which pierced the foliage, then lowered her head on the back of her hand.

"When the sun sets, you will be on the bank of the brook?"

Sister Anne nodded assent; then, calling to her goats, she returned quickly to the cabin. But before entering she turned her head, and her eyes

rested on the place where she had last seen Frederic. She smiled and disappeared.

This smile, this look, filled the young lover with delight. He was no longer a stranger, an unknown, to Sister Anne! The idea enchanted him. In love a little thing makes us very happy.

Frederic went for his horse; but should he go back to Grenoble, to return the same evening? No; it seemed to him more sensible to remain at the village, where he could get a light lunch, and then return to the woods, and wander about near the cottage which had become so dear to him.

It did not matter to him what his companions would think and say. It was just as well that they should get accustomed to his absences; for Frederic felt that he would come often to Vizille, or, rather, that he would return seldom to Grenoble. The one who was dearer to him than all the world lived in this wood. Sister Anne was already everything to him. He thought no more of the future, of his rank, of his father's plans for him. He dreamed of her only, and wished to live but for her. It is true this love dated only from the evening before, and that Frederic was not yet twenty-one years old.

He went to the village for rest and breakfast, and there he talked to everyone of Sister Anne. All took delight in praising her virtues, her sweetness, her refinement. The peasants added, "The poor girl is much to be pitied. She will spend her

life in that miserable cottage, for who would want to marry an unfortunate mute?"

Frederic smiled, and said nothing; but he thought much, for he had seen women in Paris of dazzling charm, brilliant, attractive by reason of jewels; yet he preferred to all of them the gentle young mute of the wood.

The young man found refreshments for the inner man at the village. He gave his horse a generous ration, then mounted it, and once more took the road to the wood. He fastened his horse to a tree and directed his steps toward the lowly cabin.

The sun had not yet finished half its course, but Frederic hoped that if he kept near the little cabin he should see Sister Anne, and that would give him patience to wait until evening. He could not be sure of more than a distant sight of her, but that would be enough.

The little fence which enclosed the garden was only four feet high, and it was easy to take in at a glance the whole of the tiny property. The garden was small, but every inch of it was utilized. Several fruit-trees, some vines, beans and flowers grew and mingled together in this restricted space, where Nature was allowed to follow all her caprices.

As Frederic looked ahead he saw an old woman seated under a fig-tree. She seemed very aged, but her venerable face reflected sweetness and

repose of soul. Frederic watched her some moments with deep respect; she had rescued Anne, and had been a mother to her.

The face of the old woman broke into a smile as the young mute approached her, holding in her hands a wooden bowl filled with milk, which she had brought for Marguerite's breakfast, and which she placed upon her knees. The old woman tapped her caressingly upon the cheek, saying,—

"That's a good daughter; that is good, dear child. Now sit down here, near me. You know I love to look at you while I eat my breakfast."

The young girl sat down immediately beside Marguerite. She seemed to divine her slightest wishes, and more than once she took the old woman's hand in hers and kissed it lovingly.

Frederic remained in the same spot, as if held there by a spell. He could pass hours contentedly in studying this picture. The old woman having finished her breakfast, which consisted of fruits and milk, rose, and with the aid of Sister Anne took a little walk about the garden. Frederic concealed himself when they passed near him, but he noticed that the young girl glanced into the wood, and seemed to be looking for someone.

Was she thinking of him? Ah, how happy he would be if he could believe it! His heart leaped at the thought. He was tempted to enter the garden, to throw himself at Sister Anne's feet; but the presence of old Marguerite restrained him.

At length they returned to the cottage. Frederic left the spot from which he had so long studied the garden. He wandered about the wood for some time. Every place suggested the orphan to him; each tree, each shrub spoke of her, revealed her presence. Had she not lived in this wood for nine years? Her feet had pressed this grass, and her eyes had rested on all that surrounded him.

Frederic went slowly down toward the brook. He seated himself in the spot where he had seen Sister Anne for the first time. It would be long before she could join him. He drew his tablets from his pocket; he took out his pencil. What should he write? Verses to Sister Anne! Are not all lovers poets, and are not the poets much more eloquent when they are lovers? We still remember the verses which Tibullus made for Delia; Ovid immortalized Julia; Orpheus enchanted hell with his songs when he went in search of Eurydice; love thrilled the lyre of Anacreon; love inspired Sappho. The charms of Lesbia inflamed the genius of Catullus, as those of Cynthia gave a more delicate, a richer quality to the verses of Propertius. Is not Petrarch indebted to Laura for a large part of his glory? Without her he would have been a poet, but could he have been so great a painter of love? We owe the tender elegies of Bertin, and the graceful verses of Parny, to Eucharis and Eleonora.

Time passes very quickly when we are writing verses of those we love. Frederic leaned over his tablets, absorbed in them, when a slight noise disturbed him. He turned his head; Sister Anne was behind him, looking with curiosity at what he was doing. She blushed at having betrayed her interest so frankly, but Frederic reassured her. He made her sit down beside him, and read to her the verses he had been writing.

Sister Anne knew nothing at all of poetry, but she understood what Frederic wished to say in the verses he read to her. The heart is the key of the understanding of natural, uninstructed women. It is quite the contrary, sometimes, for those who have much culture.

The young girl began to be less timid, less embarrassed, with Frederic. At sixteen, acquaintances are very quickly made, especially when nothing is known of social customs, of propriety, and the laws they impose.

Frederic seemed so good, so sweet, so full of sympathy! He was sorry for her. He thought of her, and the poor orphan was astonished to find that there was another person in the world besides old Marguerite who was interested in her fate. The village people showed compassion and pity for her; but it is not pleasant to be always an object of pity, and the sentiment in Frederic's heart was a very different one from that. She read something much more beautiful in his eyes. Be-

sides, he spoke to her with lively interest; he looked at her tenderly. In spite of herself she was already less unhappy.

Night fell. They were still sitting by the brook. They had been there two hours, but they did not dream that the time was so long.

Anne rose, pointed with her finger to Frederic's horse, which stood waiting for him. Then she looked uneasily about toward the village, the wood, the hills which led to the village, and once more her eyes rested inquiringly on Frederic.

"I am going to Grenoble," he said. "I am staying there now with two friends, who perhaps are disturbed at my long absence. But I shall come back tomorrow. I shall come back every day. Could I pass a single day without seeing you?"

The maiden smiled and was content. She led him to his horse. Frederic took the sweet hand of Sister Anne and pressed it to his lips. At last he tore himself away and started on the road to the town. The young girl went to the edge of the wood, in order to follow him with her eyes as long as the gathering twilight permitted her to distinguish his figure. At last, when she could no longer hear the horse's steps, she returned to the cabin. She was thoughtful, dreamy, full of astonishment at the new feeling that enveloped her. She did not understand it, and the young mute returned to the cottage very slowly.

CHAPTER XII

HOW WE LOVE AT TWENTY YEARS

"WHERE the devil have you been?" said Dubourg to Frederic, who had arrived at the inn just as his two companions were about to sit down to their supper.

"Oh, I have been looking about me, investigating the neighborhood," answered the young man indifferently.

"What mania has taken you, that you are forever running about the fields like this? Are you going to begin again here the life that you led at Lyons?"

"Very likely," answered the young man, "and why should I not?"

"That will be very amusing for us others who must remain here without occupation. At Lyons, at least, we could vary our pleasure, see people —"

"Yes; the Marquise de Versac, for instance," said Frederic.

"But here it's different! We already know this town by heart. If we could but introduce ourselves into some agreeable society; but when you have neither credit nor money you dare not pre-

sent yourself anywhere. You have an awkward air that betrays you immediately. But do you really think you must know every tree and rock, every bush, every bit of scenery, wherever we go? If you mean to stop before every tiny rivulet we cross, we shall be ten years reaching Italy, and your life will not be long enough to see the half of Europe."

"Indeed," said Ménard, "the Baron's remarks seem to me very sensible. We go no faster than turtles, *si parva licet componere magnis*."

"I would pardon you for staying at Naples or Florence. We can never study those monuments too much; enjoy the Coliseum at Rome or the Cathedral of Saint Peter; climb Posilipo or Mount Vesuvius. I should not be surprised if you did that. But in this country, what do you see that is extraordinary? It is picturesque, romantic,—good enough in its way; but we shall find much more remarkable places on our route. Wait until you are on the glaciers of Mont Blanc before you fall into an ecstasy, or upon a pinnacle of the Apenines; but don't stay a whole day lost in admiration over an old mulberry which shades a little rivulet, because everywhere you can find trees, shrubbery, grass and brooks, except perhaps in the deserts of Africa, and we will not go so far as that."

"Dear friend," said Frederic, "I have found here what I shall seek vainly elsewhere. It is worth more to me than all the wonders of the world."

As he said these words Frederic entered his room, without waiting to speak further to Dubourg, for he was much in need of rest.

"Say, now; tell us what you have found!" cried Dubourg. "What the devil can he have found, Monsieur Ménard?"

"I have no idea, Baron."

"Do you suppose it is the pocketbook they stole from me at Lyons?"

"Or your coach, Baron."

"My coach! You can rest assured it is eaten up before this; that is to say, that rascal of a postilion has long since sold it for drink money."

"Indeed, that is probable. What a pity! Such a venerable coach!"

"But what do you suppose he has found that is so charming?"

"Perhaps a safe way of carrying soft-boiled eggs while travelling."

"Oh, do you suppose Frederic would bother himself about that?"

"But, Baron, that would be a wonderful discovery for the traveller. I had a splendid recipe, which someone gave me for making milk punch; but unfortunately I have lost it in all our moving."

"I can see that we shall not know what he has found unless he chooses to tell us the secret."

"I shall think of it in my sleep, Baron."

"And I shall go to sleep thinking of it, Monsieur Ménard."

The next day at dawn Frederic was again on the road to the village. He descended into the valley and left his horse in a field where the grass was up to his knees. He followed the little path with rapid steps, and in a moment he was in the wood, then on the hillock, and by the side of Sister Anne, who had already taken her little flock to pasture.

A vivid red glowed in the young girl's cheeks at sight of Frederic. She smiled, and extended her hand in friendship. Although it was so early, she had already been looking for him. She had become impatient because he did not come, and had looked again and again down the road leading to Grenoble. She had known Frederic only two days, but love makes rapid progress in a heart so tender and pure. Is it possible that she already felt love for the young stranger? Poor little thing! I am afraid she did. But was it not very natural? Was she not of an age when love enters into all our thoughts and sentiments? And it was very easy to fall in love with Frederic.

"I am later than yesterday," he said; "my horse was not so impatient as I. Dear friend, I am so happy near you! I wish I need never leave you."

Anne looked at him for a long time. She sighed, pointed to the road to the town, then glanced at the cottage, as if to say, "We shall always be separated."

"Leave this cottage, consent to follow me," said Frederic, warmly, "and we shall never lose each other again!"

The maiden rose, and made a gesture of fright. Pointing again towards the cabin, she imitated the wavering steps of old Marguerite. She shook her head with great decision; her eyes glowed with a heavenly light, which said to Frederic, "Never! I will never abandon her!"

"Ah, pardon me!" he exclaimed. "Yes, I was wrong; I feel it. Your heart could never be ungrateful. Forgive me; love made me forget."

The young mute was not angry with him. She came and seated herself near him, and a charming smile lighted her features. The wind lifted her lovely hair and blew it across Frederic's face. She laughed as she freed him from her hair.

He passed one of his arms around her waist and drew the pretty head against his shoulder. His eyes exchanged tender glances with those of Sister Anne. His lips touched her cheek, and the fragrant breath of the lovely mute mingled with the air he breathed. Are not such instants the most precious in love, and the happiest in life?

Part of the day passed in this fashion. Frederic remained in the wood. Sister Anne brought him fruits and milk, so that he would not be obliged to go to the village. The maiden could not bear to think of his going away. She ran frequently into the cottage to see if Marguerite needed her,

but the old woman slept during part of the day, and Sister Anne always ran back to her new friend.

Towards evening the young girl remained longer with her foster-mother, and Frederic went down to the bank of the brook, waiting there for Sister Anne's return. He passed the time in writing another poem for her. When the young girl found him writing she sighed deeply. She lifted her eyes sorrowfully to him, as if to say, "I know nothing! I shall never know anything!" And Frederic assured her, "I will be your master. I will teach you to speak upon paper."

When night came the young man hesitated to leave his companion. She walked with him sorrowfully to get his horse, and, though her lips said nothing, her eyes said, "Tomorrow!"

Eight days slipped away in this fashion. Each morning Frederic left Grenoble at break of day, took the first horse he found at the inn, and hurried to Vizille. He spent every day with Sister Anne, and only left her at night.

Frederic did not live when he was separated from the young mute, and Sister Anne knew no happiness except when she was with him. Love had seized upon her heart, and she did not try to combat it. Why should she fear so charming a conqueror? Why should she endeavor to drive away a sentiment that brought her such great happiness?

Frederic had very attractive qualities. He told her frequently that he loved her, that he would love her all his life. She could not doubt his oaths. She did not know there was such a sin as inconstancy. Why should Frederic deceive her? She gave herself up to the pleasure of loving. Her lips could not frame for him tender assurances in return for his sweet words, but her eyes told him all that passed in her soul; and a single one of these glances was worth more than the most ardent words of another.

Frederic wished to teach Anne to write, but love played havoc with the lessons he intended to give her. Seated near her, he pressed her to him, looking into her charming face, her intoxicating eyes. He paused, and forgot what he intended to teach her. She looked at him, she smiled, and they dropped the lesson. Frederic pressed her against his heart. They forgot everything, except that they loved each other; but one is timid with innocence, especially when one really loves.

The most timid love, however, grows bolder. The habit of seeing each other, of being together, and of manifesting their tenderness, united them more closely each day. They were always alone in the wood, and it was a very dangerous place for innocence. Could they long resist their hearts, the fire which devoured them? Frederic dared everything, and Sister Anne gave herself to him without regrets, without remorse, for it seemed

to her quite natural to make that one happy whom she would love all her life.

In the delirium of his love, Frederic did not wish to be absent from his sweetheart long enough to return to Grenoble to sleep. The four leagues which separated him from the city would make him lose a few moments of her society in the morning, and would necessitate his leaving her a little earlier in the evening.

"No," he said, "I will no longer go so far from you! I cannot be an hour, a moment, away from you! If I cannot see you I would rather sleep in the woods, on the grass—anywhere near your cottage; and shall I not be much happier so?"

The pretty mute fell upon his neck, embraced him, committed a thousand follies! Every gesture expressed her happiness. He will leave her no more! Then she will always be happy! The poor little thing believed that this was possible. Suddenly, as if struck by a new idea, she led Frederic to the cottage, and showed him a window,—that of the room where old Marguerite slept. Near it was another casement. It was that of the young girl's room. She took Frederic to that side, placed her head on the back of her hand, drew him towards her breast and looked at him with joy. The young man understood. He pressed her to his heart, crying,—

"Yes, I will rest with you—always beside you. Ah, we shall be very happy!"

The child of nature learns very quickly the art of loving; for to love well, there is no need of school or teacher, — the heart is the best master. Several times Sister Anne wished to take Frederic to her foster mother. She did not understand why he seemed so anxious to keep out of Marguerite's sight. But her sweetheart said to her, —

"Marguerite would not allow you the same liberty, if she knew that you saw me constantly. She would say, on the contrary, that you must avoid me, and not speak to me."

These words were enough to keep Sister Anne from thinking further of that. Forbid her to see Frederic! Command her to flee from him! That would be enough to condemn her to tears for the rest of her life. She knew well that she would never have the strength to obey such a command, and so it would be better to conceal her happiness from Marguerite.

Every day the good old woman became more feeble. She seldom left her arm-chair, and she slept there a great part of the time. It was very easy to conceal the truth from her.

The night fell on that day when Frederic had decided that he could no longer be separated from her who had taught him the secret of real love, and who had testified her perfect faith in him. The approach of darkness no longer drove him from the wood. On the contrary, the night would bring him greater happiness.

He gave no thought to his companions, to the anxiety he might cause them, to their embarrassment, for he had all the money; he did not remember that he had a horse which belonged to the inn,—he thought of nothing in the world but Sister Anne. The memory of his father did not trouble his happiness. The present was everything for him; Sister Anne filled his thoughts; he had never known a woman who could be compared to her. Could he find anywhere in the world so much beauty and grace, so much innocence and love? Her misfortune only made him love her more. Frederic was very romantic, and he did not treat love so lightly as do most young men of his age; his conduct ought therefore to be considered less extraordinary. And besides, the young mute was so pretty! In the first transports of love, a cabin, a wood, a desert, is what one prefers. All lovers experience this romantic feeling, but with most it is of short duration. Will Frederic be more constant?

On the bank of the brook, in the path where they had so often met, Frederic waited in the gathering darkness until Marguerite had fallen asleep. Then Sister Anne was to step softly out of the cottage door, run down the pathway and look for her lover.

Frederic fastened his horse in an old ruined shed, where a wood-cutter had formerly lived, and which served the young man now for a stable.

The moon shone with soft splendor over all the scene. Its radiance was reflected in the clear water of the brook, and fell in pale, glimmering rays through the opening of the wood, and over the clearings scattered here and there.

Frederic listened attentively. He was eager for the footsteps of his beloved. The time seemed long to him; each moment as it glided away cost a sigh of love. He glanced back to the wood; his eyes sought to pierce the black firs, to penetrate even to the cottage.

Presently he heard a slight sound. It was she! He could not see her yet, but his heart announced her presence. Light as a fawn, swift as the arrow of the hunter, beautiful as happiness, the young mute slipped rapidly and joyously through the forest paths which she knew so well. In a moment she was beside her lover, who pressed a kiss upon her brow, and could only gaze at her for some moments.

Frederic was proud of his happiness. The time, the place, the pleasure which animated her features, the mystery which environed them,—all seemed to make Sister Anne still more pretty. Her hair was lightly knotted, and part of it fell on her neck. The charming outlines of her figure were veiled but not concealed by a light garment; and her eyes were so sweet, so full of love! All these things brought to Frederic a new intoxication.

"Come, come!" he said. "Show me the way!"

The little girl took his arm and guided him through the thickness of the wood. Soon they reached the cottage, and Frederic entered the humble dwelling, which became in his eyes the most delightful haven. Had he reason to envy those who live in a palace? Happy lovers! Let us leave them to their sweet solitude.

CHAPTER XIII

DUBOURG ONCE MORE PLAYS THE GENTLEMAN NEW ACQUAINTANCES

ON the day following Frederic's first absence, M. Ménard, who had risen very early, repaired to Dubourg's apartment just as the latter was awakening, and exclaimed loudly with a triumphant air, —

"I have found it, Monsieur le Baron, I am certain that I have found it!"

"Found what? Your receipt for keeping soft boiled eggs?"

"No, not that, but this wonder which charmed M. le Count yesterday: this wonder which induces him to spend his days —"

"You don't say so! You really know what it is?"

"Oh, I am willing to wager that I know it," answered M. Ménard.

"Tell it then, quickly."

"It's the Château de Bayard, which is somewhere in the neighborhood of this town, in the valley of Gresivaudan."

"The Château de Bayard? Indeed, now that I come to think of it, that is very possible.

At least we will ask him about it while we are at breakfast."

But breakfast was served and Frederic did not appear. Dubourg called one of the waiters of the inn.

"Has our companion already gone out?"

"Yes, monsieur; he started at daybreak. He took the first horse that was ready, and was gone at a gallop."

"Gone already! And he has left us here again for all day perhaps."

"I am sure it is the Bayard castle that has turned his head."

"Ahem! Well, as for myself, I shouldn't be surprised if it were a more modern wonder. But if we have nothing better to do, let's visit the ruins of the castle; we can look for Frederic there. What do you think, Monsieur Ménard?"

"I am entirely of your opinion, Baron. Perhaps it would not be a bad idea to take a pie or a chicken with us, for probably we shall not be able to dine at the castle."

"You talk according to syntax, Monsieur Ménard. We will arm ourselves with provisions; that may not be very chivalric, but it will be prudent. We will only travel like amateur troubadours. We will drive where we please. We are not too great to love our dinner, so we will spread our table at the most beautiful points, in the most imposing ruins. Ah, Monsieur Ménard, we are

not romantic; it is well for us that we were not born in the days of Amadis and of the four sons of Aymon."

"My faith, yes, Baron. In those days they had not learned how to stuff a chicken with truffles, or to serve a filet de sole with cheese."

Dubourg informed himself as to the best road to the valley of Grésivaudan. M. Ménard filled his pockets with provisions, and our travellers began their journey.

They had been told that it was three short leagues to the Château de Bayard. Every half-hour M. Ménard proposed a rest. Dubourg accepted, and drew from his pocket a bottle of the best wine that he could find at their inn. Ménard set forth his collation on a sheet of paper which was spread on the grass, and the travellers refreshed themselves. If Dubourg saw fine fruit hanging, he climbed a tree to secure dessert. Then, cutting some branches, he attached his handkerchief to them, making a little tent, so as to dine in the shade. Ménard exclaimed,—

"No one would suspect a noble palatine did that!"

"And why not?" Dubourg replied. "The Princess Nausicaa did her own washing; the daughters of Augustus wove their father's robes; Dionysius the younger was master of a school at Corinth; the son of Perseus, King of Macedonia, was a carpenter at Rome; Peter the Great was

one in Holland: so I do not consider it unbecoming to put up a tent in Dauphiny."

M. Ménard had nothing to reply to this, and he contented himself with a bow and a murmur of "Variant sententiæ."

At length the two travellers reached the ruins of Bayard Castle, of which only four towers remained standing; but they did not see Frederic wrapped in contemplation before its walls.

"Well," said Dubourg, "do you see him, Monsieur Ménard?"

"The castle?"

"Frederic!"

"Not yet, Baron; but let us sit down; let us wait awhile. I am afraid, unhappily, that this may be the last time we can refresh ourselves, for our provisions are drawing to an end. We have only a quarter of a bottle left."

"We will find a spring, Monsieur Ménard."

"But they will not be like those of Cana, Baron. While we wait, let us empty the bottle and finish the chicken. From this point we have a beautiful view of the country."

"This valley is charming. See, Monsieur Ménard, on the right; those mountains covered with snow produce a most picturesque effect and recall to me my mountains at Krapach. Look yonder, where the snow is eternal; at the height of four hundred feet it never melts."

"I see, Baron, that we are holding our last

wing, and I tremble when I think of our return."

"We will stop at some house, at a mill. There are many of them hereabouts."

"Have you any money, Baron?"

"Not a sou, Monsieur Ménard. And you?"

"No more than you."

"The devil! That is a little embarrassing. And this Frederic abandons us and takes the money with him, without disturbing himself as to what becomes of us. Of course we can live at the inn, where our account is open; but it is not pleasant to be nailed to our inn while monsieur goes on a promenade."

"It is certain, Baron, that the promenade gives us an appetite."

"Zounds! This trip begins to be monotonous, and if I were not afraid of my creditors —"

"Your creditors, Baron?"

"I would say, if I had not some creditors of my government to satisfy — well, if — but hush! there are some people coming. No doubt they are visiting the ruins. It must be that they live in the neighborhood, for their dress does not indicate a long walk."

M. Ménard lifted his head. He saw a lady and gentleman who came from the left and directed their steps slowly towards the castle. The tutor hurried to make their collation vanish by stuffing the napkin and the bottle into his pocket. Then

he rose, and rejoined Dubourg. The Baron walked towards the pleasure-seekers, and his air was already more fashionable and elegant. He swaggered gracefully, in a manner which recalled to Ménard their walks in Lyons ; and he said to himself, " It seems that the Baron is not going to preserve his incognito." Then, on his own part, he pulled out his shirt frills, stood more erect, and added some severity to his manner.

Dubourg had replaced with a simple round hat the wretched headgear which had been forced upon him at the house of the pretended marquise, but he had still on his boots the little silver tassels. He had preserved also his talent for giving to his countenance the expression of the character he wished to personate. When he was near the people who were visiting the ruins, you would have decided, from his manner, his voice, his conversation, and the lordly way in which he glanced about him, that he was some noble stranger.

The dress and the appearance of the lady and gentleman whom Dubourg wished to join indicated easy circumstances, but also provincial breeding and some pretension. The gentleman, who was about fifty, wore his hair powdered. He carried his hat in his hand, so as not to tumble his hair, which was carefully curled in sugar-loaf style. He wore a black coat, with trousers of the same color, and top boots which fell below his calves. He carried a cane with which he pointed out the

various objects of interest to the person who accompanied him. His countenance wore a look of contentment which indicated his satisfaction with his own attainments, to which was added an air of importance, which he undoubtedly felt himself obliged to maintain.

The lady on his arm was at least forty. She was well preserved, but she made the unpardonable mistake of endeavoring to appear only twenty. Despite her agreeable manners, her lisping, mincing speech, her curls worn behind her ears and drooping from beneath her bonnet, and a carriage which she tried to render sprightly and juvenile, one could easily perceive that she was middle-aged.

Dubourg advanced toward the château, without seeming to pay any attention to the strangers, except to bestow upon them a passing bow; but he made a pretence of continuing to chat with Monsieur Ménard, and spoke so as to be heard from a distance.

"This castle recalls to me that of my ancestors in the neighborhood of Sandomir. You know, my dear Ménard, — that one where we sustained such a long, such a terrible siege."

Ménard gazed at Dubourg in astonishment, but he hastened to say, —

"Oh, yes, Baron, I know very well."

"There is a tower," resumed Dubourg, "which bears a striking resemblance to that placed at the

east end of my château at Krapach. I seem to see myself again in the chamber where the prince of Bulgaria slept, when he came to break bread with my father. Ah, dear Ménard, I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you there, and offering you some of that famous Tokay wine of which I have spoken to you."

"The Tokay of Tékély, Baron?"

"Precisely. It has been bottled twenty-four years."

The lady and gentleman heard distinctly all that Dubourg said. He walked about, pretending to examine the castle, but taking pains not to go too far from them.

While Dubourg spoke, the gentleman was very attentive. His face assumed an expression of consideration, of respect. He pressed his wife's arm, — for it was his wife who was with him, — so that she would notice Dubourg, and was careful to quicken his steps, in order to keep near the illustrious stranger.

At the foot of one of the towers the lady and gentleman found themselves quite close to our two travellers. They were about to enter the ruins. Dubourg paused to give place to the lady. The husband did the same for him. This brought him opposite Ménard, and he bowed. These ceremonies ended, conversation began.

"Is monsieur visiting our country for pastime?" asked the gentleman, approaching Dubourg.

"Yes, monsieur; I am travelling for pleasure, with my friend, the Count of Montreville, of whom you have perhaps heard, and Monsieur Ménard, a distinguished professor of belles-lettres, a Hellenist of the first quality, who turns a couplet like an angel — especially at dessert."

The gentleman bowed to Ménard, whose eyes grew big with astonishment when he heard he could turn a couplet easily. But he was careful not to contradict the Baron.

"Do you live in this neighborhood, monsieur?" added Dubourg.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the lady, smiling; "we are at Allevard, about two and a half leagues from this spot. My husband bought a superb property there when he retired from the wine business."

Here the gentleman gave his wife a little nudge with his elbow, but she went on without paying any attention to him.

"We were in business only for pleasure. My husband has always had a sufficient fortune, but he wanted to do something."

"Indeed, madame. I have great respect for business — especially that of wines. Surely, Noah did not plant vineyards that we might have dried raisins only. Gideon, the Hebrew captain, himself thrashed his wheat; Saul drove his oxen; David guarded his sheep; Cincinnatus ploughed his field; Pope Sixtus V kept pigs; Urban IV

made shoes ; — I don't think it is at all surprising that your husband sold wine."

"Certainly, monsieur," said the husband, bowing to Dubourg. Then he said to his wife, sotto voce, "He is a noble philosopher."

"But since we are retired," the lady went on, "we see only the best people in the neighborhood. The mayor, the recorder and the principal property owners, — they are all people of good position. We really lead a charming life. My husband is almost the seigneur of the district."

"It is true," continued the gentleman, supporting himself upon his cane, "that I am looked upon in that light. I could have been sub-prefect of the district, it lay entirely with myself; but I should have had to change my residence, and I like my neighborhood. We are so much thought of there! We give the finest dinners; we cultivate the arts, — music. I am now studying the violin. I have sent to Paris for an organ in a case. My wife will play it; she has an ear."

"Well, now," cried Dubourg, "speaking of having an ear, here is Monsieur Ménard, who has one of the finest bass voices I ever heard. As for me, I play all instruments."

"Ah, monsieur," exclaimed the lady, with her prettiest air, "what pleasure it would give us to hear you! We have many amateurs at Allevard. The mayor plays the violoncello, and one of our neighbors is very strong on the hunting-horn. If

monsieur remains long in the vicinity we shall be charmed to entertain him."

The lady accompanied this invitation with a very tender smile. Dubourg responded with an expressive look, the husband bowed with satisfaction and humility, and Ménard looked at his companion to see what he ought to do.

Dubourg was about five minutes in exchanging glances with the lady, and during this time her husband watched the swallows.

"Indeed, madame," he said, when he had finished his ogling, "I may remain some time with my friends at Grenoble. The Count of Montreville has a great fondness for the banks of the Isère, and I love him too well to go on without him. We are Orestes and Pylades, if we are not very often together, and although we are expected at the court of Sardinia,—and I have promised to spend the winter at the court of Bulgaria,—it is just possible, as I tell you, that our stay in this neighborhood may be prolonged some time. Is it not so, Monsieur Ménard?"

"I agree with you, Baron," said Ménard.

The lady murmured under her breath to her husband, —

"How amiable he is for a baron!"

Her husband responded, "It is just because he is a baron that he is so amiable."

Ménard continued the conversation. He put on an air of greater importance because he knew

he was talking to a man who was only a retired wine merchant.

"It is altogether likely," he said, "because the Count of Montreville, my pupil, is of an extremely romantic temperament."

"Ah, that is like me — that is like me!" cried the lady, heaving a sigh. She again addressed herself to Dubourg. "I love only the romantic. I am perfectly silly over ghosts and demons. Am I not, Monsieur Chambertin?"

M. Chambertin (that was the gentleman's name) replied, smiling, "Yes; my wife has always loved spirits."

"She has not been in want of them with you," responded Dubourg.

"That is true, I have had them from twenty-four to seventy degrees."

"If madame ever makes a tour of Poland," said Dubourg, "I shall ask her to pass a few days at my castle of Krapach. She will find there phantoms of every color. It is not so gay a place as my palace of Cracovia; but it is a castle that I would not part with for two millions, and it brings me scarcely anything but snow. But I have good reason for holding it dear — have I not, Monsieur Ménard?"

"Indeed, I believe it," replied Ménard; "a castle where you have received —"

"Hush! Silence, Ménard! All that does not interest M. and Madame Chambertin."

"Pardon me, Baron," replied Chambertin, bowing. "We are much flattered in making the acquaintance of a Polish seigneur, for I believe that your excellency is a Polish baron."

"By birth," replied Dubourg, turning aside to give Ménard the opportunity of saying in a low voice, "It is his excellency, the Baron Ladislas Potoski, palatine of Rava and Sandomir."

On hearing these titles the retired wine merchant stood as if stupefied, not daring to take a step backward or forward. Madame Chambertin twisted her month in a hundred fashions, and left nothing undone for the fascination of the palatine of Rava.

"Have you come to visit the ruins?" asked Dubourg, after allowing a little time for his name to take effect.

"Yes," replied M. Chambertin. "We are not yet familiar with them, and it is really necessary to see their surroundings. This Bayard had a very fine castle, judging from what is left. But he was a famous gentleman."

"He was a chevalier — was he not, my dear?" said the lady, mincingly.

"Yes, my sweet; he was a knight of the century of Louis XIV."

Ménard coughed, and looked at Dubourg with a somewhat mocking air. M. Chambertin went on, —

"I love to study antiquities, ancient monu-

ments; it is amusing, when one has some learning. Are you studying, like ourselves, Baron?"

"Indeed," said Dubourg, "we were in rather a bad humor when we met you. We walked over from Grenoble, where they told us it was only three short leagues. I did not care to bring my carriage into these mountainous districts; but I hoped to find a good inn, where we could dine, or at least find a conveyance to the next village. I offered some peasants six pieces of gold to find me a horse, and not one of them budged. Is that not true, Ménard?"

"It is true that we have found nothing at all, Baron."

"Ah, my dear," said Madame Chambertin aside to her husband, "what a lovely idea! What an opportunity!"

"I will seize it," he replied. He placed himself before Dubourg in the third position, as he had learned his figures.

"Your excellency, if I am not indiscreet, if you do not object to accepting an invitation from a simple gentleman, untitled, we shall be charmed, Madame Chambertin and I, to entertain at our table a distinguished seigneur and a professor of belles-lettres. My carriage awaits us at no great distance, with Lunel, my jockey. In an hour we shall be at Allevard, and this evening my carriage shall take you home."

"Really, Monsieur de Chambertin, you are too

kind," replied Dubourg, bowing. The retired merchant whispered to his wife, —

"He called me de Chambertin."

"I heard it, my dear."

"Do you suppose he wishes to make me a chevalier?"

"I am sure he could do something for you."

"I am almost tempted to accept your invitation," continued Dubourg. "It will give me great pleasure to know such charming people. What do you think of it, dear Ménard? Will Montreville be anxious? Do you think we can take the time to dine with M. de Chambertin?"

"Yes, certainly we can, Baron," replied M. Ménard, who, excited by the pleasure of this invitation, carelessly drew from his pocket the napkin which had wrapped the chicken. He supposed it was his handkerchief and wiped his face with it, unaware that he covered his countenance with chicken jelly. But Monsieur and Madame Chambertin were in such a state of ecstasy that they did not notice anything of that sort. To think of having a great Polish nobleman to dine with them, a palatine, — one, moreover, who put *de* before monsieur's name, and made sweet eyes at madame, — was quite enough to turn the heads of the couple.

"We never can get four into that cabriolet," said madame.

"Don't worry, dear. I will take Lunel's little

horse. He can mount behind, and when the Baron wishes — ”

“My faith! we will go,” said Dubourg; and he added tenderly, as he offered his hand to madame, —

“The finest ruin in the world could not tempt me from you.”

They took their departure. Dubourg gave his arm to madame; M. Chambertin ran ahead; and Ménard followed, trying in vain to discover whence came the odor of roast chicken, which pursued him everywhere. At the turning of a lane they saw the country carriage, watched by a little man of about his master’s age. He looked more like a butler than a jockey, and he held an animal which, from its size and its ears, filled a place between the horse and the ass. Madame Chambertin got into the carriage with our two travellers.

“Give me your pony, Lunel,” said M. Chambertin.

“And what shall I do, monsieur?” asked the old jockey.

“You will mount behind the carriage.”

“You know very well, monsieur, I cannot hold on.”

“Then follow on foot. Imbecile! not to know yet how to hold on behind a carriage.”

As he said these words M. Chambertin mounted the pony and gave it two stout blows with his cane, as he had no riding-whip.

"Pardon me if I pass you," he cried to Dubourg, "but I must give some orders."

"Oh, I beg of you, don't take any trouble for us, Monsieur de Chambertin," replied the Baron.

But the landed gentleman was already far away; upon hearing himself called de Chambertin again, he had gone at a headlong pace.

Dubourg took the reins and drove, but this did not prevent him from saying some very gallant things to Madame de Chambertin, and he made a sign to Ménard to wipe his face. Lunel ran behind the carriage, wishing the devil would take these strangers who had caused his master to take his pony.

They reached Allevard, which was a pretty town, remarkable for a waterfall of considerable size, the power from which ran a number of mills, iron foundries and factories.

The house of Monsieur Chambertin was at the right of the road, near the village. It was a charming property, built in modern style, and, as Madame Chambertin said, almost a château.

As they descended from the carriage in a very beautiful court shaded with lindens, Dubourg secretly congratulated himself on his adventure. He found that Madame Chambertin was still charming, that she had a lovely figure and very expressive eyes. Ménard had caught a glimpse of a kitchen which appeared well supplied, and he decided that a man who possessed such a fine

establishment was worthy of consideration, even if he were neither a baron nor a palatine.

M. Chambertin ushered the strangers into a sumptuous salon on the first floor, which opened into a beautiful garden at the back of the house. Everything indicated wealth, profusion, and lack of taste. There were two clocks on a mantelpiece, another on a table, and another on a desk. The furniture was elegant, a costly carpet covered the parquet floor, the walls were closely hung with pictures, and three chandeliers were suspended from the ceiling.

"This is my little summer salon," said Madame Chambertin with a modest air. "If I had known I was to have the pleasure of receiving his excellency, the Baron, I would have prepared my great winter salon, where you can have three square dances without crowding."

"Madame, we have more room than we need. It would have distressed me to cause you inconvenience. This salon is charming, and everything testifies the taste of the goddess of the household."

"Oh, your excellency! It is true, I arranged it all. My husband wanted to put a clock in that corner, but it would not do."

"It would be difficult not to know the time of day here."

"This carpet is pretty enough. I have a still better one in my winter salon. But you must use a great many carpets in Poland, Baron."

"Oh, in Poland we have carpets six inches thick. You sink into them when you walk, as if you were on a feather bed. I hope to have the honor of sending you a piece of one."

"Oh, your excellency! Oh, Baron!"

At that moment M. Chambertin entered, with all the company he had been able to collect in haste, to come and dine with a great Polish nobleman. He had only found four people who were disengaged. First, an old notary of the village and his wife, who were about to sit down to dinner, when their neighbor ran in, much excited. He told them of his unexpected encounter, and of the honor which awaited him in receiving at his table the noble stranger and a talented professor of belles-lettres.

This news was followed by an invitation to come and dine with the great nobleman. M. Bidault (that was the name of the ex-notary) called his servant and said to her, —

"Marianne, take off the tablecloth, put the pie in the buffet, the chicken in the pantry, the fish in the cellar. We dine with my neighbor today; keep all that till tomorrow."

Madame Bidault hurried to her mirror, crying, —

"Marianne! bring me my orange-flower dress, my garden hat, my lace collarette. I cannot appear before those gentlemen in negligee. Monsieur Bidault, are you going to dress?"

"My faith! I will put on my maroon coat; that's all. See to it, Marianne, that the fish is kept fresh."

"Marianne, get me my dress."

Monsieur Chambertin went quickly on to continue his series of invitations; but he charged Monsieur and Madame Bidault not to be late. Poor Marianne was pressed on every side and did not know what to attend to first. She carried the garden hat to the cellar, and ran to her mistress with the dish of fish in her hand.

At last, after twenty minutes spent in running for monsieur and for madame, the couple were in a state to present themselves before the illustrious stranger. M. Bidault, who had composed verses since he sold out his office, anticipated much pleasure in talking over poetry with a man of letters; while Madame Bidault, who prided herself on knowing good form better than anyone in the neighborhood, was enchanted at the prospect of showing her *savoir vivre* to a great nobleman.

Upon leaving M. Bidault, M. Chambertin hurried to the mayor; but he was in the fields, where he had gone to overlook his workers, and would not return until the evening. Chambertin next went to the recorder who had succeeded M. Bidault; but the recorder had gone hunting, and his wife was making preserves, which she could not leave

There was not much time. Chambertin sought

a retired apothecary from Lyons who had bought a rather pretty place in Allevard. This was not a very distinguished personage to introduce to a palatine, but there was little time to choose, and he had much to do. Fortunately, M. Fondant talked very little, and would not be foolish.

Chambertin found him at last. He had not much time for explanations, and said hurriedly,—

“My dear Fondant, I am entertaining a great palatine of Poland; I am giving him a dinner. Come! We expect you. We dine in half an hour. Also a man of letters, who is a Hellenist incognito! Hurry! hurry! They are persons of the very highest class. Don’t keep us waiting.”

Chambertin went on. He thought perhaps he could find his friend Frossard, the ironmaster, one of the richest property owners in the district. He hastened to him. The great manufacturer was in the midst of his dinner. He had already eaten soup and beef when Chambertin, all in a perspiration, ran into the dining-room. He began to shout before he entered, “Stop, Frossard, stop! Not a morsel more!”

“What do you mean?” cried the ironmaster, holding his carving-knife aloft over a fat pullet, which he was about to carve. “Not a morsel more! I have good hopes of getting away with the legs and the wings, and I shall not leave the carcass.”

“Stop, friend, I tell you. You must come and dine with me.”

"Not today. You see it is too late."

"You must."

"I have already eaten a third of my dinner."

"That doesn't count."

"I am afraid it does."

"I have two gentlemen with me, one of whom is a man of letters."

"What do I care about that?"

"From Poland, from Cracovia, — a baron, a savant!"

"Well! What more? That is not enough to keep me from finishing my dinner."

"I offer you the honor of dining with them."

"Friend, if I dine well, I don't care whether it is with a baron or with a miller."

"Oh, come on, Frossard, old fellow. Be a little elevated in your ideas."

"My chicken will get cold."

"You will have at my dinner a delicious larded hare; and I have a paté de foie gras, which is just arrived from Strasburg."

"Ah, you tempt me."

"We will drink some of my old Pommard, and the Saint-Péray, that you are so fond of."

"I am afraid I cannot resist."

"You will follow me?"

"Yes; but it's not for your savants and noblemen, for I care nothing about them. It is on account of the hare and Pommard, for I am well acquainted with them."

M. Fondant was the first to arrive at the Chambertins'. He was naturally timid, and was much embarrassed at the idea of appearing before two strangers whom he supposed to be princes, from the few words his neighbor had let fall. The retired apothecary, therefore, remained in the antechamber which led into the salon where Madame Chambertin chatted with her new friends. He did not have the courage to enter alone, and so waited until the other guests arrived, so that he could slip in behind them.

Monsieur and Madame Bidault came next, and with them the big Frossard. M. Chambertin had been giving some orders to his cook, and hurried to meet his guests. They found M. Fondant still in the antechamber. M. Chambertin opened the door of the salon and presented Madame Bidault to his excellency, the Baron. While the exchange of courtesies went on between the Bidaults and our travellers, the big Frossard, who cared nothing for ceremony, pushed M. Fondant into the salon, although he seemed to prefer the antechamber. Madame Chambertin, having done the honors for the guests, disappeared to make some changes in her toilet.

"Your excellency," said Chambertin to the Baron, "I have gathered some friends who, like me, are delighted at the honor —"

"My faith!" cried Frossard, throwing himself upon a divan, and cutting Chambertin short.

"You came just in time, old fellow; if I had begun on the pullet I would not have left it."

"This dear Frossard is always joking," exclaimed M. Bidault, slapping the ironmaster on the back while his wife sat up very stiff in an arm-chair opposite Dubourg, who rested negligently upon a couch, like a sultan contemplating his slaves. Ménard was seated at a little distance, admiring the fine health of the ironmaster and the respectful manner of M. Fondant, who was seated beside a window in such fashion that the greater part of him was hidden by the curtain.

"If I had only had more time, Baron," said Chambertin, "I would have arranged a little musical soirée, a little fête; but I flatter myself I shall be better prepared another time."

"O, Monsieur de Chambertin, you fill me with confusion! Indeed, I feel as if I could no longer quit this country; and yet you know, M. Ménard, they expect us at the court of Bulgaria."

At these words Madame Bidault sat more erect, and bit her lips. Chambertin looked at his neighbors, as much as to say, "What did I tell you?" and M. Fondant disappeared entirely behind the curtains.

"Indeed," Dubourg went on, "this country pleases me exceedingly, and the charming people I have met here attach me to it still more."

At this compliment everyone arose and bowed. There was a similar movement behind the curtain.

"But I saw M. Fondant," said the ironmaster. "What the devil has become of him?"

"I am here, monsieur," said the retired apothecary, in a voice a trifle hoarse, as he freed his head a little from the draperies about him.

"What are you doing there, a league from us? Come nearer, Monsieur Fondant. What is the news from Lyons? What are they talking about there?"

M. Fondant turned red to his ears. He saw that the strangers were looking at him. He drew out his handkerchief, wiped his lips, moved his chair backward and forward, and at last managed to stammer, speaking through his nose to give himself more assurance,—

"How warm it is today!"

Happily, Madame Chambertin returned, and her presence gave more life to the conversation. She had put on a light muslin waist trimmed with lace. Her hair was carefully dressed, and this was not becoming to her; but she had brilliants in her ears and a superb collar of fine pearls about her neck, which made her very fascinating in Dubourg's eyes. He went forward to meet her, and taking her hand pressed her fingers tenderly. She responded by a half-smile, and rendered this more effective by a stifled sigh.

M. Bidault approached M. Ménard, whom he supposed to be the man of letters, and touched lightly upon some quotations from the "Parfait

Notaire," following them with several stanzas from "l'Almanach des Muses." M. Ménard, who wished to imitate Dubourg, and frequently assumed his pompous tone, smiled at M. Bidault with a patronizing air, and replied, "Studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant." M. Bidault, who had forgotten Seneca when he learned the five codes, responded by offering M. Ménard a pinch of snuff.

Lunel, who had slipped on a little English jacket, in which he looked very much like a snail, came in to announce that dinner was served.

Everybody rose, Dubourg gave his hand to Madame Chambertin, M. Frossard took that of Madame Bidault, the others followed, and M. Fondant closed the procession.

They reached a very beautiful dining-room. The table was set with a sumptuous elegance, and Ménard observed with satisfaction that there were four hors-d'œuvre, which always foretell a well-ordered dinner. His excellency, the Baron, was placed between Madame Bidault and Madame Chambertin. Dubourg turned oftenest toward his hostess, and the vivid red which colored her cheeks occasionally might have caused the suspicion that the illustrious guest said something to her under the table!

Ménard was between Bidault and M. Fondant. The one plied him now and again with light verses; while the other was content to pour wine

for the savant, with the result that Ménard turned more frequently to the side of the apothecary than to that of the retired notary.

At the second course Dubourg became very lively, because he had flavored his dinner with his host's Pommard. He began to talk at random of his castles, his lands, of Poland and of Brittany. He mixed the customs of Rennes with the habits of Cracovia, and the productions of his country with the snows of the Krapach Mountains. But the company, full of astonishment at what he said, was content to open its eyes and ears.

The big Frossard found the Baron to his taste because he drained his glass, and considered Ménard a distinguished savant because of the deliberate way in which he disposed of each dish. M. Bidault was enchanted to find an occasion to pose as a poet; while his wife believed herself a beauty, for Dubourg told her she had the air of Made-moiselle de Scudéri. M. Fondant was more at his ease, since no one paid any attention to him. M. Chambertin was intoxicated with joy, thinking he had a great nobleman at his table; and Madame Chambertin ogled a little, because the great nobleman had knocked knees with her very frequently under the table.

Toward nine o'clock the guests endeavored to leave the table. Everyone had tried to keep pace with his excellency, the Baron; some from politeness and some from taste. The result was

that no one was steady on his legs. The ladies alone preserved their equilibrium, for it is rarely that ladies lose their heads at the table.

In the midst of the fumes of Bacchus, Dubourg preserved enough presence of mind to realize that they were six leagues from Grenoble, and that it was time for them to return. M. Chambertin offered beds to his guests, but if they stayed, much would be expected of them. M. Bidault and the iron manufacturer were at cards, and although Dubourg could scarcely resist the attraction of the game, he knew he would cut a very small figure without money. It would be better to go now and return some other time. M. Frossard had challenged him to tric-trac, a game at which Dubourg considered himself very strong; and he hoped to win back from the stout ironmaster a part of what he had lost with those rascals at Lyons.

Ménard found himself so comfortable that he would have gladly gone to bed where he was, and Madame Chambertin may have had her reasons for wishing to detain the young palatine; but Dubourg had also his reasons for not yielding. M. Chambertin, seeing that his solicitations were useless, ordered Lunel to get the carriage ready and take the Baron and his companion home.

Dubourg said good-night to his hosts and promised to return again very soon and pass several days with them. This promise soothed the anguish of his departure.

"Remember, your excellency, I count upon your word," said M. Chambertin, bowing profoundly to Dubourg.

"We shall be looking for you," added madame, launching a glance at him which spoke volumes.

Dubourg responded by pressing his boot upon her husband's shoe, which he took for madame's. He squeezed his host's hand affectionately, and called him, "My dear friend de Chambertin."

But Lunel and the cabriolet were waiting. Dubourg and Ménard entered, and took the road to Grenoble.

The movement of the carriage put Ménard to sleep, and Dubourg, having no one to talk to, chatted away to himself.

"This acquaintance will be very agreeable to me, and will vary a little the monotony of our stay at Grenoble. These good people believe me a nobleman. Well, there's no great harm in that. I'm sure I can act like one. Madame Chambertin has such a lively glance! Her husband has excellent wine and a good table. This big manufacturer is as rich as Cræsus, and it appears that he loves to play. Zounds! If I only had the money! What a chance to regain our losses! I'm sure he knows nothing about tric-trac. A man like that could lose five or six thousand francs without thinking about it. What in the world is Frederic doing? He leaves us without

a penny! I've got to find out what he's up to. I'll have to watch him, for poor Ménard never dares to say a word. The Count has given him a pretty guardian!"

They arrived at Grenoble very late, Ménard waking up to get out of the carriage. When Dubourg saw old Lunel before him, cap in hand, he felt instinctively in his waistcoat pocket; but he found nothing there, nor in any other pocket. Lunel was waiting for the coin, and Dubourg passed his hand under his chin, gave him a little tap on the cheek and said, —

"Very good, Lunel; adieu, my friend. I am very grateful to you."

The old jockey turned away at that, and grumbled all the way home, "That's a nice kind of a fee, — the Polish!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE VISIT TO THE WOOD

WHEN Dubourg and Ménard awakened on the morning after their dinner at Allevard, Frederic had long been gone. Dubourg said —

“We must really wait for Frederic this evening, and have a talk with him.”

“Yes, Monsieur le Baron,” answered the old tutor, “you will speak to him.”

But we have seen that Frederic, on this particular evening, remained so late with Sister Anne that he finally decided not to return to the inn at all that night. It was four leagues from Vizille to Grenoble; the horse, which Frederic had taken in the morning at haphazard, went no better in the evening for having rested all day, because the horses at an inn are rarely fit to ride. It happened, therefore, that the animal was sometimes three hours in making the journey from Vizille, and Frederic did not hurry him as he had done in the morning, because it was no longer a question of reaching Sister Anne.

So Frederic was in the habit of returning very late at night, and Dubourg, after playing his usual game of piquet with Ménard, which was

the only game the retired preceptor ever indulged in, ended by going to sleep over the cards. As neither of the gentlemen had any money, they could win only the triumph of success, and as this was not sufficient to excite them the game never became heated. M. Ménard had constant access to the snuffbox of the King of Prussia, and he took a pinch frequently to make himself feel like Frederick II.

Dubourg yawned, so Ménard proposed to the Baron that they should go to bed, and postpone till next day their interview with Frederic. But the next day ran its course like the previous one. Several days passed in this way. Dubourg's impatience increased. He was eager to return to Allevard, to pursue his conquest and to try a game with the ironmaster. On his side, M. Ménard asked nothing better than to drink Pomard again with M. Chambertin, and to sit beside M. Fondant, who poured so well.

But they could not go to Allevard on foot. They must go in a style that would carry out the idea they had given of their rank; and they must have money enough in their pockets to make a figure at cards. M. Ménard could not see why that was so necessary; but, since the Baron considered it indispensable, he felt that he must be of the same opinion.

"We must see Frederic."

"Zounds!" said Dubourg. "We will wait until



this evening, and if necessary we will drink punch all night to keep awake. What do you think of that, Monsieur Ménard?"

"I think it would be an excellent idea, Baron, provided that we can have a cake to eat with the punch."

"We will have four of them," rejoined Dubourg, "we will play for them at piquet, and Frederic shall pay the bill."

Night came. An enormous bowl of punch was brought and a plate piled with cakes. These gentlemen began their games, drinking punch as they played, and they drank so often in order to keep awake that on the contrary they went to sleep very much sooner than usual. After they had each drunk nearly half a bowl of punch and swallowed half a dozen tarts and cakes, they fell with their heads on the table, Dubourg saying, —

"I am dead beaten."

And Ménard adding, —

"So am I, Baron."

They woke at daybreak, greatly disappointed to find that they had slept. But at least they could catch Frederic before he went out, and have their talk with him. They went to his room. Dubourg shouted and knocked, but no one answered. He went down to the yard and inquired for his friend.

"He did not return last night," replied the hostler.



"Did not return!" cried Dubourg. "Are you sure of that?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur; neither he nor the horse has come back."

"The devil!" exclaimed Dubourg. "That's bad. He's not been back since yesterday. That's very singular."

He returned to M. Ménard with this news. The tutor reflected for a few minutes and then said, —

"What do you think about it, Baron?"

"But, great Heavens, I asked you, Monsieur Ménard."

"I dare not decide, Baron; that is my opinion."

"It is very similar to that of Brid'oison."

They passed the day watching for Frederic, but he did not return. Dubourg was anxious about his friend, Ménard trembled for his pupil, and the innkeeper would have been disturbed over his horse had he not had the carriage of the travellers as security.

The next day at dawn Dubourg presented himself to Ménard with his hat on and said, "Come, let us find Frederic."

"Let us find him, Baron."

"To find him, we must look for him."

"So I have thought, Baron."

"That did not keep you from resting very comfortably in your bed."

"I wanted to see what you would advise."

"My advice is that we start immediately. Our friend has a face and figure so unusual that many people must have noticed him as he passed by. He cannot be lost."

"I hope so! For what in the world would the Count, his father, say?"

"Get up now and come with me."

Ménard dressed, ate his breakfast and followed Dubourg. The Baron had ordered two old work-horses to be saddled. The innkeeper consented to this very unwillingly, for the expenses of these gentlemen began to mount up to more than the value of their carriage. Presently they were both on horseback. Ménard vowed to his companion that he could not go faster than a walk, and Dubourg replied that an expedition like that in which they were engaged did not require speed.

They inquired, before leaving the inn, in what direction Frederic had gone. This was told them. All along the road people had noticed the young traveller who passed each morning urging his horse to a gallop, and came back in the evening at a quiet pace. Dubourg and his companion became tolerably certain that Frederic passed his days at Vizille.

"What is he doing there?" asked Dubourg.

"He must have found some interesting scenery."

"I should be rather inclined to think it was an interesting face."

"What, Baron ! Do you think —"

"Yes, without doubt ; for Frederic is not foolish enough to stand gazing at trees and mountains. He was looking for a heart that would sympathize with him, a soul as tender as his own ; in fact, a woman who would please him. How do you know that he has not found some young peasant, sweet and naïve, who has turned his head?"

"I wager he has gone to study the Chartreuse."

"Monsieur Ménard, you forget that Frederic is only twenty-one."

"But, Baron, don't you remember that women have always deceived him, and that he fled from Paris to escape them?"

"Is that any reason why he should not fall in love? Besides, Monsieur Ménard, if you run away from anything, it shows that you are afraid you will not be able to resist it very long."

"Well, Baron, when Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife, it was not because he was afraid of yielding."

"Monsieur Ménard, Joseph ended by falling in love, because his posterity peopled the land of Canaan."

While they were disputing, the travellers had arrived at Vizille. They inquired about Frederic in the village, but learned nothing. The villagers were occupied with their work and had not noticed the young man ; besides, he had dined only twice at the inn. We have seen that he preferred

to lunch on the provisions which Sister Anne brought into the wood. Many people had seen the young traveller, but they had not observed from which side he entered the village, nor what he did there.

Dubourg and his companion left the village without having gained much information.

"All is lost!" cried Ménard from time to time. "My pupil has been eaten by wolves, or killed by robbers, or he has fallen over some precipice while he watched the setting sun. Poor Frederic! So sweet, so gentle, so clever! There is nothing left for me to do but to weep for you, —

"Qualis populea mœrens Philomela sub umbra.

Amissos queritur fœtus."

"No, Monsieur Ménard; Frederic has neither been killed nor eaten. It is not a question of resembling Philomela bewailing her little ones, but we must find out whither the young man has betaken himself. Look! look! There is an animal that I think can give us some news."

When the travellers had left the village they had gone down into the valley, and they had now reached the edge of the wood. Frederic's horse was loose and wandering at will, in the paths leading through the valley.

"It is his horse," said Ménard. "I recognize it, by that white mark, for a horse I have seen in the inn yard. It is Frederic's horse. And it is alone, without a rider, — new proof, Baron, that

the young man is the victim of his imprudence. The horse has thrown his master to the earth! My pupil is dead! He wanted to cross the mountains — *nox erat!* He could no longer see his path! All is lost!"

"On the contrary, I believe Frederic is in this wood, and that he has left his horse, to walk about at his ease. Let us do all we can to find him; but we will be more careful than he, and fasten our horses to one of the trees."

Dubourg and his companion dismounted, and entered the wood. M. Ménard kept his handkerchief to his eyes, because he expected to see Frederic, wounded or bleeding, at any moment. Dubourg went on ahead and looked attentively on every side.

Presently he turned to Ménard with a joyous air and pointed to a little elevation of sward.

"Wait," he said; "see if my premonitions deceived me. There is the wonder Frederic has been studying."

M. Ménard followed the direction of Dubourg's finger and saw his pupil stretched carelessly on the grass, in a thick shade, and holding in his arms a charming young girl. Her head was lying on the breast of her lover and her two arms were around his neck.

"You are right, Baron," said Ménard, after a moment of surprise; "it is not the Chartreuse. This is more modern."

"I think the young girl is charming."

"And I also, Baron."

"Oh, but Frederic is a scamp! It's not so stupid of him to find this pretty creature in such a desert place. Do you still think he is running away from women?"

"It doesn't look like it at this moment."

"Come on, Monsieur Ménard; Frederic may be sentimental, but he is a man like any other. We must say good-day to him."

"I am afraid that you will disturb him, Baron."

"By the Lord, if he spends his days here he will have plenty of time to make love!"

Dubourg and Ménard went forward. At the sound of their footsteps Frederic turned, and saw them. The maiden lifted her eyes, and on seeing the two strangers pressed more closely against Frederic, and, hiding her face on her lover's shoulder, seemed to defy all dangers from this vantage-ground.

"Bravo, my dear Frederic! bravo!" cried Dubourg. "I know now why you rise so early in the morning. Indeed, your conquest is charming. She is a little timid just now, but that adds a touch of the piquant to her face."

The young mute looked at Dubourg a moment and then turned her eyes upon Frederic, as if to ask him what it all meant.

Frederic rose; the girl rose also. She clung to him closely, looking suspiciously at the strangers,

as if she feared they would take her lover away from her. Frederic reassured her. He embraced her tenderly and begged her to go and wait for him in the cottage garden. Sister Anne could hardly consent to obey him. She was afraid to leave him, but Frederic promised again to rejoin her immediately. The hand of the young girl pointed to the strangers, and her eyes said, "You will not go away with them."

He embraced her again. At length she became more calm and went away, but she turned her head many times to look at Frederic with love, and at the newcomers with distress and anxiety.

"Very pretty! very pretty!" exclaimed Dubourg, following her with his eyes.

Ménard murmured between his teeth, "If her voice is like her plumage, she is a phoenix of all the hosts of this wood."

"What are you looking for here, gentlemen?" asked Frederic, approaching the two with a little irritation.

"What are we looking for? Why, you, of course,—you, who have abandoned us, who left us in an inn without money, while you ran off to the woods to make love to a little peasant girl. She is very pretty, I grant, but she ought not to make you forget your friend and your honored tutor."

Frederic said nothing, but seemed to be thinking deeply.

"Monsieur, Count," said Ménard, advancing

towards Frederic, "it is certainly right for every man to fall in love. Adam did with Eve—it is true he had no chance to do so with others. Abraham was smitten with Hagar, David with Bathsheba, Samson with Delilah; and if a strong man like Samson yielded, how can any of us resist, for we are not like Samson? But at the same time, *est modus in rebus*; because we have a new attachment we need not forget all our duties and responsibilities, and descend from the rank in which Fate has placed us. Besides, the Count, your father, did not send you out to travel expecting you would take to the woods and live like a savage. Whence I conclude—"

Frederic came out of his reverie suddenly, and did not seem to have heard his tutor's homily.

"Dear Ménard," he said, "I have something important to say to my friend the Baron. I must speak to him alone. Will you take a little turn in the valley yonder? We will join you soon."

"Count, I can refuse you nothing. I will go and wait for you with confidence."

Ménard left the woods, saying to himself, "My little lecture has done its work. The young man feels that he has been wrong, and wishes to reform and come back like the prodigal son, with a white stick in one hand and the bridle of his horse in the other."

Ménard had scarcely disappeared when Frederic ran towards Dubourg.

"Why have you brought our mentor here? Why did you follow me to the wood? Am I not master of my own actions?"

"First, the mentor is not very dreadful; second, we wanted to know what had become of you; for you sent us no word, and how was I to suspect that for the sake of a little love affair you would live like Mad Roland?"

"A little love affair? No, Dubourg; it is a true passion, and is eternal! I have never loved anyone with such ardor. I have found none so worthy of love. Ah, Dubourg, if you knew the heart of this sweet child! She is a stranger to all the falseness of the world; her soul is as pure and beautiful as her features. Ah, dear friend, I shall never find a woman who will love me as she does; not in Paris, not in its most brilliant salons."

"Come, now; you are excited, and I see that it will be difficult to make you listen to reason. This young girl seemed to me very pretty. I hope she may be a *rara avis*; but what are you going to do? You certainly don't want to spend your life in the woods."

"Ah, I don't want to leave Sister Anne!"

"Very well; take Sister Anne with you; let her accompany us. We will make her a baroness, if you wish, for the sake of this poor Ménard,—I will agree to arrange all that if you will but leave these old firs; if you stay under them you will end by becoming an ourang-outang."

"I can't do that. This young girl has a good old woman in the cottage who has taken care of her from her infancy. She will not abandon her."

"Ah, then, you will have a whole family on your hands."

"Go, Dubourg; return to Grenoble with Ménard. I will follow you within a few days, but I cannot leave her now."

"Return to Grenoble? And do you think it is very amusing with your old tutor and without a penny to go anywhere?"

"Oh, I forgot. Take the pocketbook. Take it; do what you wish with it. I have a few louis. That will be enough for me."

"But, indeed, dear Frederic, you are foolish to live in the woods playing the sentimental lover with your little village girl."

"Oh, she is not like other women, if you only knew her — poor little thing! But no; I can say nothing to you; you do not understand my heart. Good-by, Dubourg!"

"You really wish it? Well, all right; I will take the money, and I will leave you. I know men. I have had more experience than you. In two weeks you will be tired of this kind of a life and you will come back to us."

"Yes, if Sister Anne will go with me."

"You will come without her; I am certain of that. Good-by! Make love at your ease. Make

love all day and all night, so that in a fortnight you will be sick of it."

Dubourg, having put the pocketbook in his pocket, went down rapidly into the valley, where he found M. Ménard sitting tranquilly near the horses.

"Quick!" he cried to him joyously. "Quick! To horse!"

"What! To horse? But I do not see the Count."

"He has remained with his charmer."

"He stays here, and we go?"

"Doubtless, for we have no love affairs in the wood, and we should get very sick of it."

"But, Baron, I don't understand it."

"Monsieur Ménard, I am acting as a man who knows the human heart, and especially that of young people. If we had refused to do what Frederic wished, he would have been capable of committing all sorts of follies; and, instead of that, we will leave him free to follow his fancy. I guarantee that in two weeks at the latest his love will be satisfied. He will be calm, and his reason will return. There never was a passion that could stand a tête-à-tête for three consecutive weeks. Love is a fire which burns itself out, because it is never reasonable enough to preserve its forces."

"My faith, Baron! I begin to think you are right."

"Come on; to horse, Monsieur Ménard, and long live gayety! Tomorrow I will take you to dine with our friend de Chambertin."

"Truly, Baron?"

"And I promise you we will enter the village in a fashion that will create a sensation."

"I do not see how, Baron; but you arrange everything so admirably that I have great faith in your powers."

The hope of going to dine with M. Chamberlin the next day made Ménard very happy, and he spurred ahead for the first time in his life (in truth, it was only with his heels) and trotted along beside Dubourg.

"It is a pity," he said, as they went on, "that my pupil has formed this new acquaintance. A woman sometimes makes a man commit a great many follies. Cato has said that wisdom and reason are incompatible with the feminine intellect."

"Yes, M. Ménard; and Cato probably said that after he had experienced a disappointment in love."

"Saint Bernard vowed woman organum diaboli."

"But Confucius contends that the soul of woman is the masterpiece of creation."

"Juvenal says there is no one for whom vengeance is more attractive."

"That proves, M. Ménard, that women are like the gods."

"Well, then, Origen said, 'Woman is the key of sin.'"

"I had supposed, until now, that she was rather its serrure."

"Agnes Sorel deprived Charles VII of courage."

"But another woman gave it back to him."

"Joan of Naples strangled her husband."

"But Jeanne Hachette saved Beauvais."

"All things considered, Baron, I see that it balances very well."

Our two travellers went on towards Grenoble disputing about women. It is a discussion which could lead them far, and at the end they would know no more of the subject than when they began. A wise man has said that the variety in the heart of a woman is only to be compared to the grains of sand in the sea. He must have been exceedingly wise, this man, if he knew the number of grains of sand in the sea.

But let us return to Frederic.

He breathed more freely when he found that Dubourg had really gone, — when he heard the sound of the horses' feet which carried his friends away. Then, content like Crates, who cried "I am free!" when he had thrown all his money into the sea, Frederic believed himself more free, henceforth, to devote himself to his love for the young mute. As soon as he was sure that Dubourg and Ménard were gone, he returned in

great haste to the cottage. Frederic thought only of the present. He did not reason, but he was only twenty-one, and he was passionately in love.

Sister Anne was trembling in the garden. Marguerite was asleep, and the young girl could give herself up without restraint to the sentiments which animated her.

The presence of these two men who knew Frederic caused her a distress which each moment became more acute. It seemed to her now impossible to live without her lover. Love was life for this soul of fire, who, in the depths of the wood, had not learned to rule her passions. Her loving heart had flown forth to him who said, "I love you." But when Sister Anne gave herself to Frederic, it was forever. Frederic had brought her happiness. He had reanimated her soul, bruised by misfortune. When a woman sees that she can please, she is born again to life.

What would become of her at sixteen, if she were forced to renounce this new hope? Frederic was everything to her, and, up to this moment, love had seemed to her happiness upon earth. But there is no durable happiness, especially in love. Only a few days of felicity had rolled away, and the poor little girl had begun to feel the anguish which this great sentiment always carries in its train.

Presently Frederic reappeared. She did not run, she flew to his arms. Her eyes wandered

beyond him. He was alone, and she was the more happy.

"No," said her lover, while he embraced her, "I shall not leave you. Where shall I find such a pretty woman, one more faithful, more worthy of being loved? What does it matter to me what they say, and what do I care for a world where there is nothing to love? I find happiness here. No; my father himself could not make me renounce you."

A fresh kiss pressed upon the charming lips of the young girl sealed the engagement which he thus contracted. Night brought with its shadows still sweeter moments. They were alone in the world together. They belonged to each other, and, as Frederic felt her tender, caressing arms about his neck, he repeated again, "No, I will never leave you,—never!"

But at the end of a week the hours passed less quickly for the lover. The sweet caresses of the poor little mute were not enough to occupy all the time. He felt that he must have something to do, that it is impossible to dream always on the banks of a brook.

A week later he descended into the valley. He mounted the horse which he had kept, and made some little excursions in the neighborhood. At length he said to Sister Anne that he would go for some provisions, of which they were in need, although he had done without very well when he

was first in the wood. Another week elapsed, and he looked toward Grenoble. He was astonished that Dubourg had not come to inquire after him, and that Ménard had also forgotten him. I believe he was secretly a little hurt about it. Did he no longer love Sister Anne? Oh, Frederic loves her just the same. But time passes, and, as Dubourg said, there is no love strong enough to last through a tête-à-tête of three weeks.

But we will not anticipate. Leave him with his little mute, who loves him as much as the first day because — ah, Heaven, ask any woman why — and let us return to Dubourg, for he has again the funds of the travellers at his disposal.

CHAPTER XV

FÊTE, DINNER, FIREWORKS AND SURPRISE

No sooner had they arrived at Grenoble than Dubourg called for dinner, and was served with the ordinary *ménu*.

“What sort of a dinner do you call this? We must have some other dishes, and some better wine than this is absolutely necessary!” exclaimed Dubourg, who was inclined to make a display and assert himself because he had plenty of money in his pocket.

Their host came upstairs and represented to these gentlemen that their account was already very large because — to say nothing of their lodgement and table — their young companion had foundered all the horses of the inn, in compelling them to undue speed on his daily journeys to and from Vizille.

As his only response to this representation, Dubourg drew from his pocket with a flourish a note for five hundred francs, which he handed to the landlord, saying to him, with the lordly indifference of a wealthy personage, —

“Here, my good fellow, you may pay yourself out of that!”

The landlord opened his eyes wide with astonishment; his nose, pinched with suspicion, became distended; his mouth, which he wished to make expressive of his gratification, fairly opened to the ears. He entangled himself in apologetic phrases, and finally ended by saying that he would go and reckon up his account. He hoped that the gentlemen would not leave him, and if it would be agreeable to them he would send them up some Muscat wine for dinner.

When he had gone M. Ménard, who had made a face almost as comical as that of the landlord, in his surprise, said, "Why, Baron, did you get your money from Poland?"

"Ah, surely, M. Ménard. Zounds! Do you think a man like me can be long without money?"

"But I did not see the courier who —"

"He probably came while you were asleep. The principal thing is that we can now present ourselves anywhere, without being obliged to stand around like two fools, and see the other people play, which is not the conduct of a noble. As a beginning, we will go tomorrow to visit our friend Chambertin, but it would be a good idea to send a messenger immediately, and tell him of our visit, so that he can make fitting preparations for us. What do you think of that, M. Ménard?"

"I believe it would not have a bad effect, Baron."

"In that case, hunt up a small boy, and put on him your flannel waistcoat and my morning-cap, so that he will have an English air. While you are doing this I will write the letter."

Ménard went in search of a small scullion who could easily be transformed into an English groom, and Dubourg devoted himself to the composition of the following letter:—

The Baron Ladislas Potoski, Palatine of Rava, etc., etc., etc., has the honor of informing his honorable friend, de Chambertin of Allevard, that he will visit him tomorrow at his château, accompanied by the savant Ménard. Baron Potoski kisses the hand of Madame de Chambertin of Allevard.

As soon as the note was finished it was given to the boy, who was disguised as a courier. Quickened by a coin of a hundred sous, he departed immediately to deliver it at the address.

M. and Madame Chambertin were just going to bed when the messenger reached them. It was half past nine in the evening, and in the country, when you study neither music, literature nor painting, nor cultivate your garden, the evenings seem long. M. Chambertin had played his violin, and madame had sung a new ballad; then they had spoken of the Polish baron, whom they despaired of seeing again. Monsieur had said, "It surprises me; he gave me his word that he would return." Madame sighed as she added, "It astonishes me even more than it does you."

The arrival of the messenger stopped M.

Chambertin just as he was about to thrust his leg into the marital couch. He paused, therefore, and waited, though his wife said to him, "Get into bed; our people are there to answer the bell."

"But who can it be so late?"

A knock at the chamber door was the response. Lunel announced through the keyhole, "A messenger from the Baron Potoski." At this name M. Chambertin, who still held his leg in the air, ready to thrust it into the bed, withdrew it in a flash, and losing his equilibrium rolled on the carpet. Madame Chambertin, at the mere name of the Baron, sat up suddenly and called aloud for a mirror to rearrange her hair.

Her husband arose, and ran for his dressing-gown, saying to Lunel, "I'm coming, Lunel. I'll be there immediately."

"Give it to me quick, monsieur!" cried Madame Chambertin; "I shall never have time enough!"

M. Chambertin, in his excitement, had not understood his wife, and handed her hastily a pitcher of water, which he spilled all over her. He then rushed to open the door to Lunel, who entered, followed by the jockey. Madame Chambertin was furious at her husband's awkwardness, and drew the curtains of the bed hurriedly together, that she might not be exposed to the curious eyes of the domestics.

M. Chambertin took the letter which was pre-

sented to him. He read on, and at each word his face became more radiant; he could scarcely contain himself, and cried out to his wife, —

“The Baron will come! He calls me Chambertin d’Allevard; and, wife, he kisses your hand, and all that.”

He ran to draw back the curtains, stuck his nose into the water his wife handed him, and which he proceeded to spill again.

“Take care, monsieur! What are you doing?” she cried.

“Of Allevard, wife!” exclaimed Chambertin, seizing the pitcher of water, against which he had struck so disastrously, and promenading around the room with it in his hand.

“Of Allevard! It is as if I were a nobleman. Indeed, I am almost one, and, thanks to the Baron, I hope to be one altogether.”

“Put it down, monsieur! Put down what you are carrying!” cried madame to her husband, who evidently did not know what he was doing. She then ordered Lunel to give the messenger refreshments, and to tell him that his master and M. Ménard would be received with the honors they merited.

When the courier had gone Chambertin threw himself into an arm-chair, and madame lay back on her pillows. But they were so excited by the letter they had received that they could no longer think of sleeping. M. Chambertin read it again.



The title "of Allevard" was especially flattering to him.

"It is the name of the village," said madame.

"Yes, but in writing it after my name in that way it sounds as if I were a noble."

"You know very well that they do that way in Paris. We have two neighbors who give themselves the name of their neighborhood, — M. Gérard de Villers-Cotterets and M. Lerous d'Ermenonville. Six months ago I told you you ought to call yourself Chambertin d'Allevard, but you would not listen to me."

"My dear, now that his excellency the Baron has given me this title, I surely will not drop it, and I shall sign myself so henceforth. Wife, to-morrow I shall give a fête."

"I hope so, monsieur."

"Dinner, ball, concert, fireworks! There has never been anything like it hereabouts. It will have an enormous effect. I shall invite all the best people in the neighborhood."

"I shall have my hair dressed à la Ferronière; that will be very becoming."

"I shall have the grounds lighted up."

"I shall wear my long train."

"With colored glass shades on —"

"A bodice of baby blue."

"Numerous lamps in the court —"

"My cherry slippers."

"The biggest we can find."

"A scarf."

"Garlands of flowers."

"My collar of pearls."

"We will have guns fired."

The landlord had reckoned his account so that just five hundred francs were coming to him, and he had therefore nothing to return to his excellency, the Baron. Anyone but Dubourg would have considered it a little dear to ask a hundred crowns because three or four wretched horses had been foundered, for they were not good enough to draw the plough; but the Baron could not trouble his head with accounts. He contented himself with asking the landlord to provide him with a pretty tilbury for the next day, and a couple of boys to represent his suite.

Dubourg investigated his funds and found himself the possessor of four thousand five hundred francs. It was more than was necessary to win ten times as much, and he cherished a hope that the ironmaster would return to him what the chevalier and the much-frilled count had stolen.

The next day toward noon Dubourg and Ménard made preparations to set out for Allevard, where they expected to arrive before dinner. As the landlord had not been able to find a tilbury in the town, the gentlemen had to be satisfied with a two-seated wagonette. Dubourg and Ménard took their places on the front seat, and back of them sat two little scullions, dressed out in vests

and trousers borrowed from different people, and wearing old hunting-caps, so big that they fell over their ears, which gave them a foreign air that was quite fascinating. Dubourg charged them especially to feign complete ignorance of French, and to communicate only by signs, so that they might pass for two little Poles. The two jockeys promised to obey.

They started, Dubourg driving; but, although he had insisted that the landlord should give him his two best horses, he could not force them into a gallop. He had to be content with a very moderate trot. Ménard was afraid that dinner would be over before they reached Allevard, and Dubourg was broken-hearted because he could not whirl suddenly, like a thunderbolt, into the presence of M. Chambertin.

It was half past five before the village of Allevard became visible. Dubourg sweat blood and water forcing his horses. At last they approached the house of M. Chambertin, before which a crowd was collected. Dubourg said to Ménard, —

“Poke them with your cane, so that we may at least drive up at a good trot.”

As Ménard leaned forward to spur the coursers, quite an outcry arose.

“Here they are! Here they are!”

Four gunshots were fired, one after the other. Then two violins and a clarinet executed the overture of the “Caravan.” The two horses, fright-

ened by the gunshots and the music, ran away, dragging the wagonette up a hill instead of following the road which led to M. Chambertin's house.

Dubourg cried from afar, —

"It is charming! It is delicious!"

Ménard was afraid that they would be overturned, and said, —

"Be careful, Baron; our horses are running away."

And M. Chambertin, who wished to have the grounds lighted in two hours, said to his guests, —

"See how cleverly my friend, the Baron, drives his carriage. He has purposely driven up the mountain to give us an example of his skill."

In returning down the mountain the horses rushed faster than ever, and at each instant the frail vehicle threatened to overturn, as it passed over the rocks or sank into the ruts. Ménard was trembling, the two jockeys shrieked, and Dubourg exclaimed, —

"Shut up, fools! You are forbidden to speak French. Don't be afraid; I'm responsible."

The carriage flew like the wind. It was fortunate that the horses turned toward the house; but, instead of entering the great gate, the coursers rushed furiously against the wall. The shock was so violent that Dubourg was hurled to the ground, while crying, "I'm responsible for all!" and the two jockeys rolled on the grass. Ménard only stuck fast in his seat. He seemed nailed there.

But no one was hurt. Dubourg rose smiling, and began to bow to the company. He assured them that this was the fashion in which he always alighted from his carriage in Poland. Ménard, proud of having kept his seat, pulled down his waistcoat as he entered. The two scullions followed, holding on to a certain part of their anatomy which had been bruised by the fall, and to which they pointed significantly when Lunel asked them if they were wounded.

Dubourg was given the most flattering reception. M. Chambertin was in heaven. The Baron had pressed his hand, calling him his dear friend. Madame de Chambertin was not less satisfied; the illustrious stranger had whispered in her ear, as he saluted her, —

“You have been in my thoughts every moment.”

All the company seemed charmed to have met a great nobleman, who did not put on airs, and who made everyone feel at ease.

M. Chambertin had assembled about forty people, all the rich property owners of the district, — the mayor, the notary, the recorder, the iron manufacturer, some friends who had arrived from Paris and Lyons, in fact all whom he thought worthy of meeting his excellency, the Baron.

The dinner hour came. Dubourg had the place of honor beside madame, and M. Ménard was enchanted to find himself beside M. Fondant,

who, as usual, talked little, but was assiduous in pouring wine and passing the various dishes.

"I hope," said M. Chambertin, "that the Baron will remain some days with us, and M. Ménard also."

"Yes," replied Dubourg; "I have arranged to spend a little time in this delightful retreat, and so has my friend, M. Ménard."

These words were accompanied by a little touch on the knee of Madame de Chambertin, who devoured the wing of a chicken in order to stifle an indiscreet sigh. M. Ménard bowed and M. Chambertin continued:—

"I have only one regret, and that is, you have not brought your friend with you,—the Count of—the Count of—"

"Oh, he is so original!" said Dubourg. "He flies from society. I have left with him my coach and my suite, and have brought with me only these two little Poles."

"Ah, are they Poles? They are very pretty. I thought they were Cossacks."

At this moment Lunel came to tell Dubourg that his two jockeys were playing the devil in the kitchen, and would not answer a single question.

"Indeed, I am not surprised. They do not understand French."

"Let the Baron's people do as they please," said Chambertin, "and try to understand their signs."

"They make lovely signs!" replied Lunel, under his breath. "They do nothing but stick their fingers in the sauces, and point to their breeches."

The gayety of Dubourg and of the learned Ménard freed everyone from restraint. They laughed, they chatted, they ate and drank. But every time Dubourg spoke, M. Chambertin asked the company to be quiet, saying, —

"Listen to his excellency, the Baron."

At dessert M. Bidault was inclined to sing; but Dubourg had said that singing had gone out of fashion in good society, so that M. Chambertin silenced M. Bidault, crying, "It's not the thing to sing any more! What are you doing there?"

But the big Frossard had the habit of singing, and he did not care what Chambertin said; so he began. Chambertin could not prevent the vocal exercise, but he begged the company to pass into the concert hall, and hoped that the manufacturer's drinking-song would pass for a classical fragment of the concert.

They had ordered a piano and a harp. A matron and a young lady of the neighborhood entertained the company with an air with thirty-six variations. The mayor took his bass viol, the notary a violin; they gave Dubourg a horn, for he had said that he played every instrument. The Baron passed the instrument on to Ménard, remarking that he cared for none but the English

horn. The tutor looked at him with amazement, but he whispered under his breath, —

“Blow into it, and don’t appear embarrassed.”

M. Ménard had not been very moderate at dinner, and so was ready for anything. Taking the horn, he applied an opening to his lips, blowing, and rolling his eyes. They began a trio, to which Dubourg beat time. Whenever the horn came in there was silence, for though Ménard was blowing beautifully he had not found the mouth of the horn. But Dubourg appeared satisfied, and turned to the company, saying, —

“I have never heard such sweet playing! One would not believe it is a horn!”

Everyone applauded, and after the selection was finished Ménard said to himself, “I knew how to play the horn, and I never suspected it!”

The concert was ended at last. Dubourg spoke of cards, and presently the tables were arranged. Tric-trac was never played in the drawing-room, but Dubourg declared that they played nothing else at the court of Poland. M. Chambertin immediately ordered a tric-trac table brought in, and announced that before a week had passed he would have four in his salon. Dubourg and the big Frossard placed themselves at the table, and M. Chambertin watched them play, but he did not understand the game.

Dubourg was in a good vein. He pushed his adversary. He piqued him to play. He had

already won twenty louis, when a violent explosion was heard in the garden.

"It is the fireworks!" cried one and all, and the company ran into the garden.

"To the devil with the fireworks!" exclaimed Dubourg. "I had just got into a lucky streak."

He tried in vain to keep the manufacturer, who preferred to see the fireworks. Dubourg decided, therefore, to follow the example of the others.

He left the drawing-room. The fireworks were at the end of the garden. Dubourg met Madame Chambertin, who came to see what detained the Baron, and who perhaps sought an opportunity for a tête-à-tête. Dubourg took her on his arm. He was in an excellent humor. He recalled the conversation under the table, the suppressed sighs; he expected to pass some days in the mansion, and he ought to show himself worthy of the attention he had received;—for all these reasons he led madame through a path which did not run directly to the spot where the company were gathered.

Madame murmured from time to time, "Where are you taking me?"

But Dubourg replied, "I don't know. Let us go on."

They came presently to a little summer-house, built like a kiosk, which was not lighted, and had only one window, high above the floor. Dubourg

opened the door and pushed Madame Chambertin in. He entered with her and took care to close the door after him.

M. Chambertin was giving the fireworks especially for his friend, the Baron, and while the Bengal light was on he looked everywhere for him but could not see him. He ran all about in search of him, crying, "Where are you, Baron? Come, please come! Two pieces have already gone, and they are going to light the first transparency."

Dubourg, who was probably not interested in a transparency just then, heard M. Chambertin's voice, and called to him from within the kiosk,—

"I am here; I am very happy; don't trouble about me. Madame, your wife, is kindly explaining the fireworks to me."

"Ah, but I do not see you at the window."

"That is because madame is afraid of the sticks, but we see very well."

"Oh, so much the better. I am delighted that you are well pleased," said M. Chambertin, coming beneath the window. "I ordered the figures myself. Did you see the sun?"

"No, but I felt it. It was like the moon."

"See these little serpents. What a continual movement! That is pretty good—is it not?"

"It is superb!"

"Wife, explain the transparency to his excellency, the Baron."

"Oh, the Baron understands everything with

wonderful facility," replied madame, in a voice somewhat enfeebled by — smoke?

"Take care! There goes the bouquet!"

The bouquet went off in fact. They applauded. They cried bravo. The company returned enchanted, and madame came out of the kiosk with his excellency, the Baron.

"The bouquet was famous!" cried M. Chambertin, rubbing his hands together.

"I really was quite stunned by it," said madame, with a little tremble in her voice.

"It was worthy of the seigneur of the district!" exclaimed Dubourg.

"My faith!" replied M. Chambertin; "I think I am pretty nearly that."

"You are quite that, my dear friend. I will certify to that."

"When a man like you reassures me, Baron, I cannot doubt it."

But it was after eleven o'clock, and in the country this was very late. All those who lived in the neighborhood took their carriages. Those who lodged in the village went to light their lanterns, which their servants carried. They said good-night to M. and Madame Chambertin, and complimented them upon the beauty of the fête. All saluted his excellency the Baron with great respect and went home. Then M. Chambertin reflected that his illustrious friend had need of repose. He perceived that the savant, M. Mé-

nard, had dropped asleep in a corner of the drawing-room, and ordered the servants to show these gentlemen to their apartments.

They had prepared a beautiful suite on the first floor for the young nobleman, and a pleasant room on the second story for the savant. If poor Ménard had possessed no other title to respect than his reputed learning, he might have been sent to the garret; but everyone showed him marked attention because he was the friend of the Baron.

Each retired to his own apartment. M. Ménard soon snored like a happy man. This means that happy people do not have bad dreams.

Dubourg stretched himself with delight on a bed soft as down. It was hung with silken curtains, fringed and tasselled with silver. His thoughts ran on.

“My faith! It is very amusing to play the baron. Here is a mansion where they overwhelm me with attentions and kindness; they anticipate my slightest wishes — and all because they believe me a palatine. If I were to present myself quite simply as Monsieur Dubourg of Rennes, they would beg me to pass on; and yet a change of name has not made me a different person. But, indeed, all men have their element of folly, a little more or a little less. It would undoubtedly be noble to try to heal them, but this seems very difficult for me. I would rather humor their

mania, and thereby be more agreeable to them. This M. Chambertin is an idiot. He has been a wine merchant two-thirds of his life, and now he wishes to try to play the gentleman, and give himself airs of nobility for the remaining third. Why should I be troubled about his foolishness? He is perfectly enchanted to entertain a baron, so I will be Baron here as much as I please. His wife is very happy to have me pay court to her, so I will do so until I find someone that I like better; and it is probable that I shall not find anyone I like better while I stay in her house, because a coquettish woman on the shady side of forty never invites a pretty girl who —"

In the midst of his reflections Dubourg began to doze, and would soon have been sound asleep; but suddenly noise and confusion broke out in the court below. There were cries, oaths, and bursts of laughter. In the midst of the racket Dubourg thought he distinguished the voices of his jockeys. He rose hastily, slipped on the necessary clothing and opened the window looking on the court. He saw several servants gathered there. Old Lunel was fighting over a roast chicken with one of the little Poles, and the other one cried and screamed in a corner of the court.

The two little scullions, faithful to the command Dubourg had given them, had only responded by signs to the other domestics; but Lunel, who was at once butler, valet and jockey

to M. Chambertin, had taken a great dislike to the Baron's two servants as well as to the Baron himself. He could not forget that he had driven the Polish nobleman to Grenoble and had received no reward except a tap on the cheek.

The two little fellows had bruised their thighs in falling from the wagonette. That is why they pointed so frequently to their wounded part, in trying to make themselves understood. Lunel did not comprehend their gestures, and thought they were trying to insult him.

To revenge himself for his real or fancied injuries, Lunel had forced the poor boys to ascend to a small room in the garret, and left them there without any supper, and with no attention to their comfort.

The two scullions did not go to bed, thinking every minute that someone would bring their supper, which did not come; and they could not believe they were really to be left unprovided for. Tired of waiting, they crept from their room at last, to see what they could find. Everyone had gone to bed, but Lunel was watching, for he suspected that the jockeys would be up to some tricks.

The little rascals were very hungry. They caught the odor from the meat-safe in the kitchen, where the window was left open, entered easily, and, breaking through the screen door, took what they pleased. One seized a roast chicken, which

had not been touched, and the other the carcass of a hare, on which there was still good picking. Each fled with his dish, but Lunel had seen them. He yelled "Stop thief!" lashing at them with the whip he carried. The two rascals gained the window. As they jumped, one fell, and crushed his nose in his roast hare. The other, more fortunate, ran on with his chicken; but Lunel caught him and tried to tear it from him. Then a battle began.

The little jockey forgot his Polish and cried, —
"You shall not have it!"

Lunel replied, "Ah, you rascal! You can talk French now — can you? I'll teach you to make nasty signs to me!"

The little fellow who had fallen screamed between his sobs, —

"I've broken my nose! It's all the fault of that sneaking old man, who wouldn't give us any supper."

Just at that moment Dubourg appeared at his window. All the servants of the house had descended into the court, and M. Chambertin had emerged on his balcony in his dressing-gown.

"What does this noise mean?" said M. Chambertin.

"These are my little Poles."

"Yes, your Poles, who talk French now," replied Lunel. "I caught them stealing in the pantry."

"They didn't give us any supper," said the two children, "and he waited for us in a corner with his whip."

"A miracle!" cried Dubourg. "They have spoken! they understand! A whip seems to be the best instructor. Come, little fellows, come up! Let me hear you speak French, and you shall have some supper."

"And you, rascal!" cried M. Chambertin to his valet; "let me see you touch one of the Baron's Poles again, and I will chase you off with a stick!"

Lunel went off muttering, "They are Poles about as much as I am a Turk!" The two jockeys ascended to their master, with the roast chicken and the hare which they had saved from the fray. The servants of the Baron went to bed, and M. Chambertin prepared to do the same with his spouse, who dreamed that she was in the kiosk, and that someone shot off a huge fire-cracker.

Dubourg thought it was not safe to keep the little rascals near him any longer, as they might be guilty of more foolishness. The next morning, very early, he put a crown into the hands of each and started them off to Grenoble, to the great content of Lunel, who did not love the Poles.

The days following slipped away very peaceably and pleasantly. A few friends only came to share the pleasure of M. Chambertin, and to listen to the tales which it pleased Dubourg to

tell about his castles, his lands, his family and his functions at the court of Poland. M. Ménard did not say much, but he ate and drank well, and cited here and there a Latin author; then the guests who did not understand looked at one another with added respect.

Dubourg got his card party together every evening, but they played for very small sums. The big Frossard was absent, and M. Chambertin never became excited over play. Dubourg began to believe he would not double his capital.

But M. Chambertin's fête approached, and on this occasion everything in the mansion must put on new life. Some very wealthy friends were expected from Paris, who were invited in honor of the Baron. Madame Chambertin had written them to come, for she wished to do everything to retain the Baron, and she repeated daily to her husband, —

"You do not know the honor M. Potoski does us in staying with us. You cannot divine it."

M. Chambertin replied, "I assure you, my dear, I am very proud of it, and I will do everything to keep him."

"Ah, you do well, monsieur, for his departure will cause a great void in my life. He is a man very difficult to replace. He is noble to the ends of his fingers."

There was great activity in M. Chambertin's mansion, for unusual preparations were going on

for the magnificent new fête. Everybody understood that the hero of it would again be the handsome stranger. M. Chambertin endeavored to surpass himself. He had sent for workmen, who began to labor mysteriously in the garden; and they always directed their energies to the side near the kiosk, where it was evident he was preparing some surprise for his guests. His last fireworks had been talked about for six leagues around, and he intended that the next should be reflected as far as Lyons.

The great day had come. A numerous company had assembled at M. Chambertin's house. He was enchanted with the surprise he had planned for the Baron, and he did not even let his wife into the secret. A few new people had come to augment the circle about the retired wine merchant. A delicious repast was served; the dishes were delicate, the wines the finest. Dubourg almost did the honors of the table himself; for in calling his host "my friend of Allevard" he completely turned his head, and Chambertin mentally put himself and his fortune at the Baron's command. Dubourg then gave his attention to madame. He said to her in a very tender aside, —

"Twice happy was the day I first met you!"

Madame responded, smiling, —

"What did you say? 'Twice'? Oh, that is not enough: it should be three times, four, five, six times, I should say."

"We will put it at seven," said Dubourg, "and stop there."

The dinner ended. M. Chambertin had only one regret,—that his friend Durosey had not arrived from Paris. He had been expected for several days, but had not appeared.

Every time he heard the name of the friend Durosey mentioned, Dubourg said to himself, "I knew someone of that name in Paris, but where the devil did I meet him?"

He finally asked M. Chambertin where his friend Durosey lived in Paris, and what was his business. Chambertin replied, "He is a great merchant who has retired with an income of twenty thousand livres."

"Well, then," said Dubourg to himself, much relieved, "it is not the one I knew, for I was not in the habit of visiting great merchants."

They passed into the drawing-room, where a rich property owner, a great lover of *écarté*, was about to propose a game with the Baron, when Lunel came to tell his master that M. Durosey had just arrived. M. Chambertin was delighted. He hurried out and soon returned, bringing his friend, whom he presented to the company. Dubourg looked at the newcomer and recognized a Parisian restaurant keeper, whose place he had frequented for a long time. He owed him an account of four hundred francs, which he had not been able to pay for the last two years, but

which had been again and again presented. M. Chambertin had been expecting a great dealer in beefsteaks, but he was extremely careful not to announce him as a retired restaurant keeper.

The meeting was very disagreeable to Dubourg, but he did not lose his head; and when M. Chambertin approached with Durosey, to whom he said, "Here is his excellency, the Baron de Potoski, Polish palatine," Dubourg saluted him smiling. He thought that by blinking his eyes, twisting his mouth and making various grimaces he would so alter his looks that his creditor would not recognize him.

M. Durosey did not pause before Dubourg. The young man gradually became more at ease, and devoted himself to the game with greater calm. But from time to time he glanced about the salon, and when he met the eyes of the former restaurateur, he believed that the creditor examined him with especial keenness. Dubourg then returned to his mouthings and grimacing, for which he had a knack, twisting his nose and mouth continually toward his left ear.

The presence of the creditor disturbed Dubourg greatly. He was confused, annoyed; he lost his head, and his money began gradually to pass to the side of his adversary. Dubourg ventured to double and triple the risks, the wealthy property owner wishing to refuse the Baron nothing.

Quite a group gathered about the table, on which were several bills for five hundred francs, and M. Durosey placed himself just opposite Dubourg. The Baron could not lift his eyes without seeing his creditor, and, to complete his misery, luck was always against him. In half an hour his travelling fund passed to other hands, and Dubourg rose, announcing that he must go and get more money.

He went in search of his friend Chambertin, intending to borrow some thousand francs, which he hoped would win back what he had lost; for with a gambler, as long as there is life there is hope. The restaurant keeper had not lost sight of Dubourg for a moment. He followed him and caught him in the embrasure of a window, so that the Baron could not avoid him.

"And how is M. Dubourg?" he asked, with an impertinent air.

"Dubourg! What do you mean by Dubourg?" replied the false baron, making his nose and mouth work faster than ever.

"Oh, I had no trouble in recognizing monsieur," replied the creditor in a louder tone; "but I did not know he was a Polish baron."

"Ah, silence, dear M. Durosey!" said Dubourg, who saw that it was not possible to deceive the restaurateur. "I did not recognize you at first, but now I recall you perfectly. I am enchanted to see you again."

"And I am delighted to see you, monsieur. You seem to have plenty of money now. You can bet five hundred francs at écarté, so I hope you will pay me the four hundred that has been running so long."

"Yes, yes; with the greatest pleasure. I will give it to you this evening. When I left Paris I quite forgot this little matter."

"But I sent to you twenty times, monsieur, when you lived on the fifth floor, in the Rue d'Enfer, and also —"

"Oh, I know all that. Silence, Monsieur Durosey! Since that time I have come into my property — into my titles. I shall pay you in a moment."

"Oh, then, you can count on it, Baron, of course this will remain between ourselves."

Dubourg left Durosey, and was about to go in search of M. Chambertin, when he entered the salon, exclaiming, —

"To the garden, everybody! They are going to set off the fireworks!"

Dubourg approached his host and said to him, "I have a favor to ask of you."

"After the fireworks, Baron, I will do anything you wish; but I want you to go to the kiosk now. I flatter myself you will see from there just as well as you did last time. Madame will conduct you."

M. Chambertin went off with an air which

indicated that there was something in the wind, and Dubourg said to himself, "Zounds! That's pleasant of him,—to send me to the kiosk with his wife."

He descended to the garden and found Madame Chambertin, who was waiting, happy in recalling to herself the last fireworks. She asked nothing better than to witness the second display with him, from the little kiosk, where the view was so admirable. One could sit there so comfortably, too; and that was quite important, as she had asked her husband to provide quite a long series of pieces.

The rockets went off, the girandoles and the transparencies; but when they came to the bouquet, M. Chambertin said to the guests assembled in the garden,—

"Turn toward the kiosk and look well at what you see there; this is the surprise."

Everyone turned toward the kiosk. M. Chambertin gave the signal; the walls of the pavilion fell as by enchantment. The roof stood upon four columns only, and four cressets placed in the interior were lighted swiftly by a fire-train, and illumined a transparency on which were the words, "De Chambertin's tribute to the Baron Potoski."

This was the surprise on which M. Chambertin had worked for many days with secret hopes and great expectations. But he little dreamed of the surprise which his friend the Baron reserved for

him. The fire-crackers, the rockets, the destruction of the kiosk, had been so promptly concluded that the couple within had not been given time to finish their conversation; and it seemed very lively indeed to the assembled company.

The men laughed, the women bit their lips in order not to do so. Ménard, who was behind the crowd and could see nothing, cried, "Will someone explain to me the transparency?" and M. Chambertin was in a state of stupefaction.

All this occurred in an instant. It took no longer for Dubourg to see what remained for him to do. He had not a sou, and a creditor had found him; he had no hope from his friend Chambertin, who would either thrash him or challenge him to a duel;—it was important, therefore, to leave the place as soon as possible.

The cressets were extinguished. Madame Chambertin had fainted, which was the best thing she could do. Dubourg took advantage of the smoke which had replaced the lights, leaped into the garden and mingled with the crowd which surrounded the kiosk. He darted into a side path, and warned Ménard, who ran after him immediately, that if he uttered a sound he would beat him.

At the end of this pathway was a little door which gave an outlet from the grounds. Dubourg opened it and pushed Ménard out. The tutor did not know what had happened, and

imagined that perhaps M. Chambertin's house was on fire. Dubourg closed the little gate, threw the key into the field and hastened on into the country.

"Let us go on," he said to his companion, "at a double-quick pace! As fast as we can! We have drunk from the cup of pleasure, and now we must follow a stricter rule. That will be good for us. This is the sentiment that fits us now: '*Non est beatus qui cupida possidet, sed qui negata non cupit.*'"

"Amen," replied Ménard, as he trotted along beside Dubourg.

CHAPTER XVI

THE IMPROMPTU COMEDIANS. EVENTS WHICH ARE STARTLING

THE two companions had run for almost a league as though they were pursued, when poor Ménard, whose avoirdupois interfered with his agility and who was quite spent and out of breath, declared it to be impossible for him to proceed any farther, and flung himself down upon the grass. Dubourg, who better understood the gravity of the situation, and felt that its unpleasantness would be augmented personally for him should M. Chambertin pursue and overtake them, thought that they might now venture to rest for a while, and he therefore seated himself beside the old tutor.

It took Ménard some time to recover his breath sufficiently to ask Dubourg the questions urged by his curiosity, though the simplicity of his nature did not allow him to doubt his companion.

"Will you not explain to me, Monsieur le Baron," he said at last, "what I am greatly at a loss to understand, why we have run away like a couple of thieves from our friend Chambertin? He was so kind, he overwhelmed us with po-

liteness ; we had beautiful rooms, the softest beds, the finest table ; he did everything he could to show his appreciation of our merits. What has happened ? ”

“ Dear monsieur, no matter how many times the pitcher goes to the well, in the end it is filled or it is broken, just as you please. In this case it might be either. ”

“ What is the pitcher ? What is broken ? I don’t understand your excellency. ”

“ I can well believe it, and I must explain myself in another manner. Did you see that man they called Durosey, and who only arrived this evening at Chambertin’s ? ”

“ Yes, your excellency. ”

“ Do you know what this man is ? ”

“ They said he was a retired merchant. ”

“ Yes ; no doubt he took that title to deceive me more easily. Did you notice what a sinister face he has ? ”

“ I noticed, your excellency, that he looked at you very often with marked attention. ”

“ Zounds ! I can well believe it ; he recognized me ! Monsieur Ménard, this man is nothing more nor less than a disguised Turkish spy, — and he has been sent in pursuit of me. ”

“ Is it possible ? ”

“ You know that at different courts I have pleaded the cause of the Greeks, and roused several princes in their favor. The Turks have

sworn my death, and this man is one of their agents. I recognized him from having often seen him in Constantinople. His presence is always the sign of some bad luck that is coming to me. I am sure that the entire neighborhood of M. Chambertin's house was watched by his accomplices. I should have been carried off in the night, and you also; for it was known that you accompanied me. Before a fortnight had elapsed our heads would have ornamented the castle of Seven Towers, and our bodies been dragged at the tail of a horse, to show the power of the Sultan. You see, now, whether I had reason for flight."

"O good God!" cried Ménard, looking behind him. "I think I feel better—a little. Don't you believe we could go on? If they should follow—"

"No, no; don't be anxious, Monsieur Ménard. The rascals have lost our traces and dare not follow us."

"But how did it happen that M. Chambertin received them at his house?"

"Ah, dear Ménard, you do not know men. With a dozen cashmere shawls, a collection of pastilles, a box of bottles of attar of rose, you can make people do whatever you wish. But I don't blame Chambertin. He has been deceived. I had my suspicions, and when the fireworks went off I saw several bad-looking fellows hanging around, and that settled it. I decided to leave."

"I think you were very wise. But your carriage."

"I shall certainly not go to look for it."

"Nor I! But it belongs to the landlord at Grenoble."

"He has our post-chaise to pay himself."

"But what shall we do hereafter?"

"Use our legs for the present, I am afraid. Anyway, if you haven't a penny to pay for horses there is not much use in a post-chaise."

"What, monsieur! You haven't any money?"

"No, dear Ménard; I lost this evening all I possessed. The presence of this Turk upset me; I knew not what I did, and I played all wrong."

"It is easy to understand that. Fortunately, my pupil, M. Frederic de Montreville, has the funds for the journey. We can do nothing better than go in search of him."

"How can you be sure that Frederic has any money? This young man has just made a new acquaintance, and new acquaintances, Monsieur Ménard, are usually pretty expensive. One must be generous. One can refuse nothing to his sweetheart. I am sure that little girl will get him into foolish expenses. At that age one knows nothing of the value of money; one has no economy."

"But, your excellency, I don't see how they can possibly spend much money when they are living in a wood."

"You don't see! well, I see very easily. It may be one thing, it may be another; they have a thousand fancies. Do you believe that they have stayed all this month since we left them in that cottage? By no means. I'll wager you anything that before now Frederic has set the little lady up in an establishment."

"What! Your excellency, you did not suggest to him —"

"He is big enough to carry out his own wishes. But don't worry; I will go to the wood. I'll go first alone, so as not to make him angry; then if he listens I will bring him with me. But we must live until we have arranged all that. How much money have you?"

"Nearly ten crowns."

"That's very little. But if we lived with economy it would keep us some time. Of course we should have to eat frugally, but that would be good for us. All these grand dinners have heated us up too much. It is very unwholesome to eat five or six dishes every day and drink several kinds of wine."

"But it seems to me, your excellency, we both grew stout at M. Chambertin's."

"Yes; but that would have played us a bad turn in the end. A little cheap sour wine will arrest this tendency to embonpoint. The luxurious delights of Capua caused the Carthaginians to degenerate; in the end, the table of M.

Chambertin would have produced the same effect upon us. That would have made me quite desperate. Decidedly, I shall return to my incognito."

"Ah, your excellency, this time I am of your opinion; for if those Turks should find us—"

"It is partly on that account that I feel sure it would not be safe for us to return to Grenoble. I might be arrested there—that is to say, carried away by these rascals. Besides, we should not be well received by our landlord if we had no money; he would pretend, I will wager, that his carriage was worth more than ours. We will avoid passing through that town, and we will go on, with our ten crowns, and sleep in some little village."

"But when we have nothing more, your excellency, what then?"

"Oh, well, we shall see. Don't let's worry about that so soon. Frederic will write to his father."

"I am afraid the Count will be angry."

"I will write to my aunt."

"To your aunt, your excellency?"

"I mean to my steward. Rest assured, we shall find some way; besides, if we become downhearted will it change the result? Let us be resigned. See, it's lovely weather, and we are not tired; let's go on. My faith! there's no better way to enjoy the country than to travel on foot. Come on, dear Ménard; have courage. Since we have

been together we've met many ups and downs, but have you ever seen me blue?"

"Ah, Baron, everybody hasn't your philosophy."

"I will teach it to you. Think of the misfortunes of Marius, of Hannibal, of Prince Edward, of the little daughter of Henry IV; of the misfortunes of Marguerite of Anjou, and of the many other persons who have been placed in positions much more difficult than ours; then pity yourself, if you dare."

The travellers took the road once more. It was curious enough to see Dubourg in full dress, with frills and thin shoes, walking beside Ménard, who wore gray silk small-clothes, black silk stockings and buckled shoes. In this costume he was forced to climb mountains, to leap over ditches and walk over rough ground. It was fortunate these gentlemen had taken their hats when they went to see the fireworks; otherwise, they would have been obliged to traverse Dauphiny bare-headed.

At daybreak they entered a peasant's house and asked for breakfast. Dubourg ordered an omelet, and with it some of the ordinary red wine of the country. Breakfast was served to these gentlemen under an arbor, where they were surrounded by various domestic animals which freely offered their society.

"How good it is to be in the open air!" cried

Dubourg. "All your crowded antechambers, all your gilded salons,—are they worth these fields, the sweet liberty we enjoy at this table?"

"It is certain," said Ménard, pausing to chase away a great cat, that returned continually to stick its paw in his plate—"it is certain that everything is very free here; there are no restrictions. Scat, there! The dog has run off with my bread!"

"Oh, well, Monsieur Ménard, everything must live. In the time of our first parents these innocent animals shared the meals of their masters. The lion came to eat from the hand, and the tiger played about the knees of man."

"You will confess, Baron, that those animals have very decidedly changed their character."

"Never mind. I love all that which carries me back to that time of innocence. When I see this fowl stepping over the table and the duck dabbling at our feet, I believe myself in the golden age. It is only when I feel in my pockets that I discover the illusion."

Unfortunately, the eggs of the omelet were not fresh and the wine was decidedly sour; Ménard made a face at every mouthful he took and every drink he swallowed, but Dubourg said,—

"I don't know any dish more wholesome than an omelet. Wherever you go you find it. If there are eggs, you surely can have an omelet. Everybody knows how to make it. It is a universal food, a dish of nature."

"If the eggs were only fresh."

"My faith! this little taste of straw isn't disagreeable, and can at need replace the tarragon. As to the wine, — well, it will do us no harm."

"It is devilish sour."

"That shows it is unadulterated."

In spite of all that Dubourg had said to prove the excellence of the breakfast, Ménard repeated as he rose, —

"We must find M. Frederic de Montreville as soon as possible."

Dubourg said to himself, "Yes, he will receive me well when I tell him I have spent all his money in a month. How the devil shall I get out of this? Besides, how can I ask him for more when he has given me all he has? I can't lie to him; that would not do. I really believe I shall have to persuade Ménard to come and live in a corner of the wood with me. We will be hermits, and I will play no more *écarté*."

The travellers had skirted Grenoble without entering the town. They stopped in a little hamlet, and Ménard spoke again of finding Frederic. Dubourg felt a little irritated, and said he would go at once to Vizille and learn the news. He left the hamlet and, reaching a little wood, stretched himself on the grass and slept there all day. In the evening he returned to Ménard. He held his handkerchief pressed to his eyes, and sighed as if in great grief.

"Well, well! What has happened now?" asked the tutor with much anxiety.

"Fool! Idiot! Ungrateful one!"

"For Heaven's sake speak, Baron, speak!"

"I knew he would do something foolish. He's gone with his young woman. They left the wood two weeks ago."

"O my God! What shall I tell the Count? What shall I tell him when he asks me what I have done with his son?"

"Tell him that you have lost him."

"Do you think, your excellency, that such a response will be satisfactory?"

"Then say he has lost himself. But don't worry, dear Ménard; I assure you we shall find Frederic. I have friends in all the courts of Europe. The young man will be brought back to us."

Poor Ménard was a little quieted by this promise, and Dubourg went on:—

"Let us think of ourselves before we trouble about him; for our position is anything but brilliant. We shall never better ourselves in this miserable hamlet. Let us get to the next town. And, dear Ménard, don't look so downcast; you'll give a bad impression wherever we go, if you are so melancholy."

The travellers started off once more, and that night they reached Voreppe, a little village about two leagues from Grenoble. Dubourg asked for

the best inn, and went there with Ménard. They entered the common dining-room. Dubourg carried his head high, and had a determined air. Ménard did not dare to lift his eyes, and his manner was timid and deprecating.

Several travellers were gathered there, gossiping and waiting for supper.

"Do you gentlemen wish to take supper at the table d'hôte?" asked the servant.

"Yes, of course," replied Dubourg. "We love society — don't we, dear friend?"

"Yes, your ex — yes, dear friend," said Ménard. A punch in the ribs had reminded him that there was to be no longer a baron. Dubourg listened to what was said around him, but the conversation was not especially interesting; the merchants talked of their business, some of the village people repeated the news. Dubourg heard nothing in all this of a new Chambertin to dazzle.

He walked about the room with great strides, rattling some big pennies in his pocket, and stopped every few minutes before Ménard to offer him a pinch of snuff. Ménard, in spite of his sadness, could not but feel cheered at sight of the box that was presented to him.

Suddenly a little gentleman about fifty years old entered. He was dressed in a cinnamon-colored coat, green small-clothes, and boots à la hussard. He wore a cap of which the visor might have

served for an umbrella, entered the salon with an air of being very busy, and spoke exceedingly loud.

"They will not come! They can't get here, and there is my cast incomplete! I'm desperate! I have no more spirit for anything!"

The little man threw himself into a chair and the people of the village and of the inn surrounded him.

"What's the matter, Monsieur Floridor?" said the landlady. "Haven't your actors come?"

"The best, the most important are not here, — the lover and the noble father, two talents lacking to complete my troupe. The lover came from Cambrai, where he has played the leading parts for twenty years. He has a charming, a wonderful talent. A month ago I saw him play 'Sargine; or, The Pupil of Love,' because for several years he had taken both the lover's rôles and those of the ingénu. Ah, I was satisfied — more than satisfied! Magnetic voice, superb figure! He is a little taller than I. And in tragedy, what fire, what soul! I have wept to see him play *Tartuffe*. As to the noble father — ah, there is the gifted actor! He has been the delight of Beaugency for thirty years, and I have seen him at Paris play with Doyen with maddening success. He can fill all the rôles. He can play kings, fathers, tyrants, old men. There is nothing he cannot do. He is only cast as noble father because he has no

teeth, but this does not prevent his being very telling in his speech."

"And why have they not come?"

"Oh, why? Because the Colin has a cold, and the noble father got into a row in a wineshop and is in prison for a fortnight. These things only happen to me! After I had taken all that trouble to make a theatre, a pretty theatre, out of the old stable, to have it turn out so! I succeeded admirably, for the theatre is beautiful. I flatter myself our hall is charming, — an orchestra, a parterre, three first-tier boxes and an upper gallery; all on one floor, and decorated with taste.

"I was going to leave the theatre of Grenoble far behind; the people around here would have been so delighted. They are all connoisseurs at Voreppe, and, though they have never had a theatre here, I am sure I should have made a great deal of money. I had one box engaged by the magistrate. I gave him free entrance with his family; and all the principal people of the neighborhood said they would come, perhaps."

The little gentleman stopped at last to take breath and wipe his face. Dubourg had not lost a word of what he had said. He sat in a corner of the dining-room thinking deeply over some new project.

"Really, it is very exasperating," said the landlord. "I had ordered a dress for my daughter to wear when I took her to the comedy."

"Exasperating, did you say?" cried Floridor, twisting himself upon his chair like one possessed. "Why, it is frightful! I would give a hundred francs to replace my two actors. But that's nothing. I would gladly sacrifice myself to open my theatre."

Dubourg heard these words. He had remained in the background and had not appeared to be interested in what was said.

"Ah," said one of the waiters of the inn, "if I only knew how to act, I'd do my best to get that."

"I had engaged my two artists for a month at sixty francs each," said M. Floridor. "That is a little high; but you have to pay for talent."

"And can't you replace them?"

"Why, how can I? I have made a tyrant of the wigmaker and a confidant of the journeyman carpenter, who has a superb voice. I persuaded the constable's wife to play the princesses, and I've got the cooper's widow for an ingénue. That is all I can find in the village. But they go beautifully; they are jewels.

"As to me, I play when it is necessary; but as I must also be prompter I cannot take any long rôles. I had collected quite a little wardrobe of costumes. There are two Spanish coats which the last rope-dancer left for security with the wine-shop keeper; there's an old lawyer's robe to cut up for tunics, two otter caps to use as turbans, and

some curtains that I bought at Grenoble to make mantles.

"We should have opened day after tomorrow with 'Phèdre' and 'Le Devin du Village.' In 'Phèdre' the carpenter would have been Aricie, because we have only two women. But he is very fine-looking; he has no beard, and he would have done very well. As to the two confidants, Ismène and Panope, I will declaim them from my box.

"What a success we should have had! My Colin would have done Hippolyte, and my noble father would have been magnificent as Theseus! The wigmaker took the rôle of Théràmène. The rascal had his part at the ends of his fingers; he did not make a beard without reciting it. And after all that, Hippolyte must get a cold, and Theseus go to quarrelling in a wineshop!

"How shall I make it go? Ah, if a great actor from Paris would only come to town, or a talented stranger, such as are often going about! But such a man will never stop at Voreppe."

"Supper is served, gentlemen," said the servant of the inn.

"All that won't keep you from eating, Monsieur Floridor," said a pedler to the little man.

"Of course; I shall eat from habit, but I have no appetite. This event has cut me through and through, legs and arms."

"But it hasn't cut his tongue," said Ménard, under his breath. He was preparing to seat him-

self at the table when Dubourg advanced with a majestic air, paused before him, and began to recite, moving his right arm as if he were swimming: —

“Yes, since so faithful a friend I find,
My fortune a smiling face inclined;
And already my anger doth disappear,
Since she has cared to rejoin us here.”

Ménard gazed at Dubourg with a startled air.

“Have you found him?” he asked. “Who, then? Is it my pupil? Will he come? Is he going to rejoin us here?”

Dubourg stepped on Ménard’s foot, because he observed that Floridor, instead of sitting down at the table, was listening with attention. He grasped the tutor’s arm and cried, —

“Is it thou, dear Élise? Oh, thrice happy day!
Oh, blest the Heaven that thus my vows doth pay!
Thou who, like me from Benjamin descended,
Gave to my earliest years a joy unended.”

“Delicious! delicious!” cried M. Floridor, advancing toward Dubourg, clapping his hands.

Ménard rolled his eyes about, looking for that Élise of whom the Baron had spoken. He saw only the servant of the inn, and turned to ask if she were called Élise.

“Monsieur is an actor?” said M. Floridor, turning to Dubourg, hat in hand.

“Me, monsieur!” replied Dubourg, pretending that he was surprised and annoyed at having

been overheard. "Me! I swear to you, monsieur—but what could have given you that impression!" he added, deepening his voice, like the villain in a melodrama.

"Did you ask what?" cried the little man. He was enchanted. He took Dubourg's hand and pressed it in his own.

"Ah, monsieur, you betrayed yourself immediately, without suspecting it. But I should have recognized you anyway. That voice, that manner, those noble and majestic poses! Only an actor of the first order could unite all that. You are he. You cannot deny it."

"I see," said Dubourg, smiling with an air of false modesty, "that it is difficult to conceal anything from you; but my comrade and I have resolved to preserve an incognito."

"Your comrade!" cried the little man, trembling with joy. "Is monsieur also an actor?"

"He is a first-class talent in the weeping line, superb in tragedy, and of a natural humor in comedy," said Dubourg, pointing to Ménard. The tutor was listening to all this like a person who heard a language he did not understand. But M. Floridor did not leave him in this state of immobility. He fell upon Dubourg's neck, he fell upon Ménard's neck, and he would have fallen upon the neck of the maid if they had not stopped him.

"Heaven has sent them!" he cried, running

around the room like a mad person. "My hall will open! We shall play 'Phèdre.' We shall have the whole town in tears with 'Le Devin du Village.' Landlord, give us a bottle of your best wine. I have the honor of offering a supper to two actors who are here incognito."

"What is he talking about?" whispered Ménard to Dubourg.

"That means that we are two great actors of the king of Poland. This twaddler is paying for our supper, and he will pay us much more besides. Talk like me, now, and try not to have the air of an imbecile."

"But, your excellency! you! me! Pass for actors!"

"Monsieur Ménard, actors are men, like all others. Roscius was admitted with Sylla, Garrick is buried near the kings of England, Molière was an actor, and is not the less a great man. Two of the first actors of our time have played in comedy, and have lost nothing by that."

"But, monsieur, Baron, I have never played."

"Neither have I, but that does not frighten me."

"If they find it out what will they say?"

"They will not know it, as we are here incognito."

"But I have no memory, and I shall never be able to learn a rôle."

"They will prompt you."

"But I am very timid, and I should never dare appear in public."

"When you get your rouge and patches on you'll be as cheeky as a page."

"I shall be detestable."

"We'll charge them a high price, and they will think we are wonderful."

"But—"

"O Heavens! Don't think of any more 'buts.' Remember all this is only for three or four days. It is just a little good time. It will have no results, and will enable us to wait comfortably until our funds arrive. It seems somewhat singular, however, that when a man like me, a Polish nobleman, an elector palatine, decides upon a certain action, a commoner like you should give him advice. If you don't play the comedy with me, I'll abandon you to the anger of the Count of Montreville, and what will you do? You do not know how to find his son."

"I will play, monsieur! I will play!"

"That's fortunate."

While this little dialogue was going on M. Floridor ran into the next house, where the wig-maker lived, telling him that two great actors had just arrived at the Sun of Gold Inn. He did not know their names, but they must be of renown, for they travelled incognito, and it was a fine opportunity to retain them for several engagements in the town.

The wigmaker left the curls of the recorder's wife, for which his iron was hot, and ran to tell the news to all his patrons. The patrons told it to their neighbors; it passed from one to another, like a game of crambo. The town of Voreppe is not very large, and before the inhabitants slept they knew that two illustrious actors, who travelled incognito, were within their walls.

M. Floridor returned, and seated himself at the table. Dubourg was careful to place Ménard next himself, so that he could prompt him at the right time. The director of the theatre was seated on the other side of Dubourg. The remaining guests showed much regard for the two travellers, because they saw that M. Floridor treated them with such consideration. People frequently follow the example of others in this world, without asking the reason.

The little director talked continually, Dubourg launched tirades and quotations from time to time, as they returned to his memory, and Ménard concentrated himself entirely on his plate.

"I would give a great deal to know with whom I have the honor of taking supper," said M. Floridor.

"We do not wish to be known," said Dubourg; "but, after all your courtesy, it seems ungracious to remain silent. We are the two leading actors of Cracovia; we have a leave of absence for travel in France, to perfect ourselves in the French

language, which is that of the Polish theatre. Owing to this fact, our plays are frequented only by the best people of the country, like the Bouffons of Paris."

"I understand; I understand. And what kind of plays do you give?"

"All, from the pantomime to grand opera. My comrade Wolowitz, whom you see, is the Fleury of Poland; and I may venture to say that I am the Talma. Ah, if you could only see both of us in 'The Hunters and the Milkmaid'! But you do not play opera here."

"Pardon me; we play opera, — opera comique, without music indeed, because we have not an orchestra; but if you deign to yield to our wishes, our city will be delighted to see on our stage two artists like yourselves."

"There's no doubt about our popularity in Poland. Ah, when we play to a good crowd there's some fun in it. Do you remember, Wolowitz, at Smolensk? We had played 'The Deserter' and 'The Dog of Montargis.' You played the assassin. Eh? Do you remember the effect you produced?"

Wolowitz did not reply because he did not yet know his name. Dubourg kicked him under the table several times to make him lift his head. He replied, while he went on with his supper, "Yes, your excellency."

"Do you see? He still calls me 'your excel-

lency,' " said Dubourg. " He always thinks he is on the stage."

Another kick recalled to Ménard that he had been very stupid, and he murmured in Dubourg's ear, " Tell me your name then ; I can't divine it."

" When people saw on the bills ' Boleslas and Wolowitz,' " replied Dubourg, looking significantly at Ménard, " the crowd filled the theatre, and we were covered with wreaths and flowers."

" Oh, you will have them here ! " cried M. Floridor. " They will throw them to you. I have had a dozen made expressly to throw on the heads of my actors. You will have verses made in your honor, too, — quatrains. I have arranged all that."

" You are right ; that is always good. That flatters the actor and excites the public."

" Ah, Monsieur Boleslas, can I hope that you and your comrade will consent to grant us a few appearances ? "

Dubourg required pressing. They had given an oath, he said, not to play in any theatre in France. Floridor pressed them, besought them, and finally ordered a fresh bottle of wine. Ménard was touched by the supper and the attentions of the little director, and when he rose from the table he would have played anything he was asked.

Dubourg did not yield so easily, because he

wished to be paid as high a price as possible. Floridor did not leave him; he was ready to throw himself on his knees. He would make any sacrifice, he said, to open his theatre with such remarkable actors. At last he offered these gentlemen a hundred francs for four performances, which was an enormous price for an entertainment given in a barn. Dubourg consented, declaring that he did so merely as a favor.

The little man was in a transport. He made three posters upon the spot, which should be put up in the town the next morning, to announce to the public that the celebrated Polish actors, Boleslas and Wolowitz, would play in their theatre.

"We wish to open with 'Phèdre' or with 'Le Devin du Village,'" said Floridor.

"Oh, well, it makes no difference to us!" cried Dubourg. "Anything you please."

"In that case we will make our début with these."

"Gladly. I will play Phèdre."

"What! Phèdre? Do you play feminine rôles also?"

"Oh, of course not. I meant to say Hippolyte. And Wolowitz will make you a superb Theseus."

"Excellent! For 'Le Devin du Village' I only need the Colin."

"I will take charge of that. In four days we will play both of them."

"Four days is rather long."

"But we must have a little rest first."

"Very well; we will wait four days. You will be announced tomorrow. Have you a wardrobe?"

"No. Because we did not expect to play."

"Never mind; I will take care of your costumes."

Floridor left our two travellers, and they prepared to retire. Dubourg laughed at this new adventure; and Ménard said to himself again, "As long as the Baron does it, why should not I?"

SISTER ANNE
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CHAPTER I

THE COMEDY AND ITS RESULTS

ON awakening the next morning poor Ménard could not realize that he was to play Theseus; but Dubourg came to him, with a book of the play in his hand, and pointed out the rôle that had been assigned to the tutor. The little manager had sent it over first thing in the morning, with the information that a first rehearsal of the entire company would be held promptly at mid-day.

"Come," said Dubourg, "the rôle consists of less than a hundred lines, and what is that to a man like you, who has learned Horace and Vergil by heart, as well as a great deal from many other authors."

"That is very true, but then I have passed the better part of my life in learning those things; and I have only three days in which to learn this rôle."

"Don't be afraid, I'll warrant you can do it; besides, there will be a prompter," added M. Dubourg.

"Good enough," said the timorous Ménard, "that will be my salvation."

"Be sure you know your entrance lines; that's all that's necessary."

"Oh, I'll answer for that; I know them now:—

"Fortune hath ceased my vows t' antagonize,
Madame, and in thine arms doth place—"

"Bravo! You say them like an angel!"

"I feel anxious about the curse, though."

"Oh, if you make the gestures all right, the rest will take care of itself."

At noon M. Floridor came to conduct the gentlemen to the theatre, where the remainder of the company awaited them. The sight of the little hall amused Dubourg exceedingly; it was reached through the dovecot, which had been utilized as a box office. Ménard came to grief immediately against the two old casks that were to serve as mountain scenery.

The troupe showed great respect for the two newcomers, although they read the rôle from the manuscript. Dubourg could scarcely open his mouth without hearing the others exclaim,—

"How well he reads! What talent!"

It was the same with Ménard. The tutor was amazed at the applause which was showered upon him, and wondered if he had really possessed a latent talent for the theatre.

"Do you take snuff while the scene is on?" said Floridor, addressing Ménard.

"Why not?" he replied. "I play a king, and

the King of Prussia took a great deal of it, as this box testifies."

"In Poland," remarked Dubourg, coming to M. Ménard's assistance, "we take anything that pleases us while the scene is on. It is the accepted thing, and quite according to tradition in many rôles."

"Oh, how very nice that is!" exclaimed the watchman's wife, who was to enact the character of Phèdre, "and I should never have dared to take a pinch while playing the princess."

"That being the case," said the journeyman carpenter, "I'll venture to slip a little quid into my mouth when I am taking the part of Aricie, since M. Boleslas thinks it allowable."

"Do anything that pleases you. Great talent excuses a thousand follies."

"Non est magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiæ," said Ménard.

"Do you hear? He's talking Polish," said the theatrical manager to his artists.

The three following days passed in rehearsing, but at length the date of the first public performance arrived. Ménard knew nothing by heart but his opening speech, in which, however, he was admirably proficient, and Dubourg assured him that that would be sufficient. Boleslas himself did not remember a word of his rôle, but that did not disturb him in the least.

The morning of the performance he took pains

to get his hundred francs in advance; he told M. Floridor that Polish actors were always paid in this way. The little director counted out the sum without delay, and Dubourg put it in his pocket. The costumes to be used in "Phèdre" were brought to the inn.

"But don't we dress at the theatre?" asked Dubourg.

"We haven't dressing-rooms yet," replied M. Floridor, "so everyone dresses at home; but as the weather is fine that causes no inconvenience."

"Then I shall have to go through the streets as Hippolyte?"

"The theatre is only two steps from your inn, and you can play this rôle in boots, for Hippolyte is a hunter."

"That's true."

"We haven't any bow, so we shall be obliged to use an old musket, which I will bring you; the ramrod will do for arrows."

"That's all right."

"I am sure you will like the wig. Hippolyte should have his hair falling in ringlets about his neck; so I have made some alterations in a Louis XIV wig, and it is exactly the thing."

After the director had gone Dubourg dressed himself with the aid of Ménard. The tutor did not appear until the third act, and so had plenty of time to make his own toilet. Dubourg kept on his black trousers, for the hundred francs were in

the pockets; and he preferred to have the money about him, not knowing what might happen. He pulled over these a pair of wide nankeen breeches, put on a white piqué waistcoat, and threw over his shoulders the large mantle covered with rabbits' fur, which represented the tiger's skin. The perruque completed this toilet. He daubed his face with rouge, took the gun in one hand and his handkerchief in the other, and started for the theatre. He urged Ménard to hasten, so that he would not be late at his entrance.

The hall was full, which should make the receipts about eighty francs. Floridor was in a state of ecstasy. He ran from his box under the stage, and from the stage back to his box, in full view of the audience. There was no way of passing under the stage, and the cloth which served as a curtain was hung on a rod and drawn to the side, like the curtain of a magic lantern.

Dubourg arrived dripping with perspiration, because the rabbit-skin mantle was very heavy, and the perruque was enormous. The comedians uttered a cry of admiration as they saw him enter.

"Oh, isn't he handsome!" they exclaimed on all sides.

"Doesn't he make a splendid Hippolyte!"

"Oh, I shall play Phèdre from inspiration!" said the watchman's wife, who cast very ardent glances at Dubourg.

As Phèdre unfortunately squinted a little, and had an enormous nose full of snuff, Hippolyte did not respond to her loving glances. He went forward to draw the curtain, and look into the hall. The moment his head became visible a cry arose on all sides. The ladies believed they had seen a lion. Floridor ran from his box and, turning toward the audience, exclaimed, "I told you truly you would be ravished and enchanted!" He began to applaud with all his might, the spectators in the front rows following his example. Dubourg saluted the audience with his most noble air and retired behind the curtain.

Everybody was ready at last. Phèdre wore a Mary Stuart gown, a most foolish bonnet, and black patches innumerable, even on her nose. C  none had dressed in red and black to give herself a dangerous air; and she had put on a tiny pair of mustaches, because Dubourg said that would mark her as a woman of character.

The carpenter, on the contrary, had sacrificed his budding whiskers to play Aricie. They had put on him a dress of white percale, and a wreath of roses in his hair. He imitated a woman's voice tolerably well, but he kept on chewing tobacco.

The wigmaker, who filled the r  le of Th  ram  ne, had his hair dressed in the style of Francis First, and he carried his sabre of the national guard as a sword; with all this he was gorgeous in a Spanish costume, which gave his appearance

a charming variety. The two other male characters were declaimed by Floridor from his box.

They only waited the arrival of Theseus before opening the performance, but he was still delayed. He did not come on, however, until the third act.

"Let us begin anyway," said the director; "we cannot wait for him any longer. The audience is impatient, and Theseus will certainly come before the third act."

"No doubt his toilet is keeping him," said Dubourg. "He is a man of the utmost exactness in costume, and he will not put in a pin if it is not according to tradition."

The director was at once prompter, manager and stage carpenter. He struck three little blows to attract the attention of the audience, and then drew the curtain, which at first stuck, and disclosed only half the scene; but with the aid of two of the spectators, who came upon the stage, it was completely drawn. Then M. Floridor descended into his box, candle in hand, and the drama opened.

When Dubourg appeared on the scene, swaggering majestically, a murmur of astonishment ran through the audience, which was not altogether admiration; for Dubourg certainly was not handsome in his perruque, with rouge running over his cheeks, and an old musket in his hand. From the glimpse of his head when he peeped through the curtain, people had expected a beautiful man

of lofty stature ; instead of that the mantle quite crushed him, and as Théràmène was tall he over-shadowed the hero.

“ It is a Pole ! ” said someone in the hall.

“ He’s awfully homely,” said the young ladies, “ but they say he has great talent.”

Dubourg rolled his eyes in frightful fashion to give himself a striking physiognomy. Théràmène was unfortunately so tall that his head touched the beams, and he was obliged to bend constantly, so as not to sweep the cobwebs from the ceiling of the palace.

Dubourg was not at all timid. Not content with reciting his rôle, he interspersed it with shrieks like those of a deaf person, and gesticulated so warmly that before the end of the first scene Théràmène had received two stout blows from Hippolyte. At the third the hairdresser began to get angry, and said between his teeth, —

“ Curse you ! Take a little care ! If you go on like this I shall be a baked apple before the piece is ended.”

But the audience was delighted with this warmth and excitement. It applauded ; it cried “ Bravo ! ” Dubourg’s enthusiasm increased, and a woman sitting in the parquet was obliged to go out. She was in a delicate situation, and feared that the contortions of Hippolyte would make her prematurely ill.

The first act went very well. The audience was

a little astonished when the prompter declaimed the rôle of Panope from his box, and no one appeared. But the rôle was short, and it passed without comment. To help matters, Floridor turned toward the parterre and said, —

“Gentlemen, the minor parts are played in this fashion in almost all the smaller cities.”

The time was passing, and Theseus had not arrived.

“What the devil can he be doing at the inn!” exclaimed Dubourg. “Do you suppose he can’t get into his costume?”

“Impossible!” said the director. “I gave him a superb yellow tunic, and trousers of the same material. For diadem he has a turban of the same color, that I used in ‘Mahomet.’”

“Then Theseus will be all yellow?”

“Tradition says so, and we must be true to that. But let us go on with the second act, and hope that he will appear.”

The second act began but did not go so well as the first. Aricie, in a fit of exasperation, expectorated his quid of tobacco at Hippolyte, upon which the hunter gave him a kick in the rear, at the moment when his lover was murmuring, “Moderate thy kindness, for the excess of it confuses me.”

“That will make you pay attention,” said Dubourg.

“If I were not playing a woman’s rôle, I’d

answer you in another fashion!" cried the carpenter, doubling up his fists.

"I advise you to keep still."

Floridor hastened from his box to tranquillize Hippolyte and Aricie. He succeeded in settling the difficulty and the piece went on. A moment later Dubourg was in the scene with Phèdre, and waited for the prompter to give him his lines. But the prompter did not whisper, because he could no longer see. He called aloud, —

"Snuffers! snuffers! Bring the snuffers!"

"Is he crazy?" said Phèdre, and stooping over she took the candle in her fingers and snuffed it with much grace. "There, my dear," she said; "that's what we do when we have a little intuition." She then replaced the candle in the box.

This little interruption did not please the audience, which had already murmured at the dispute between Hippolyte and the Princess. One spectator was more critical than the others, because he had attended the theatre at Grenoble. He threw a raw potato and hit Phèdre in the left eye, and the watchman's wife finished the scene in tears; so that when the second act concluded it looked as if a storm were brewing.

Floridor came out of his box after each act, to see how things were going. He ran upon the stage to console Phèdre, who did not wish to play any more. He endeavored to restore the courage of his actors, and assured them that the last acts

would make everything right. He depended greatly upon the appearance of Theseus, who had not yet arrived, and who he was certain would produce a great effect ; but Theseus did not come, and the anxiety became general.

“What can have happened to him? I will run over to the inn,” said Dubourg, “for this delay begins to surprise me. I will bring him back immediately.”

“Hurry up!” cried Floridor, “for if we make the audience wait that will spoil everything.”

Let us see why M. Ménard did not reach the theatre, for he was a man who was usually very punctual in all that he had to do. After Dubourg left he busied himself with his toilet. This was no trifle for a man who had never been to a ball, had never disguised himself, and had worn the same costume for thirty years. Ménard examined thoroughly the tunic, the Turkish trousers and the turban. He had quite a struggle before he could consent to cover himself with these yellow garments and paint his venerable cheeks. He was obliged to strengthen his decision each instant, by recalling Roscius, Garrick and Molière, or he would have refused to play in the comedy. But he had promised, the engagement was made, besides which his excellency, the Baron, a Polish nobleman, set him the example, and he must yield to circumstances.

After a great deal of trouble he was at last

costumed as Theseus. He considered himself, smiled, did not find it so bad. He felt a little better when he realized that he was about to play the king of Athens. He mentally ran over his rôle, especially his entrance speech; then he emerged from his chamber to go to the theatre, saying, "*Sic fata volunt.*"

At just this time a traveller in a fine carriage arrived at the inn. Everything about him indicated the man of wealth and the man of the world. The innkeeper hastened respectfully to receive his orders. The traveller was a short, thin old gentleman, whose face was full of severe lines. He inquired briefly whether any strangers had come to the village within the last few days, and after the host's response exclaimed,—

"I don't know what can have become of them!"

"Will monsieur have supper?" asked the innkeeper.

"No, I am not hungry. I want my horses taken care of. Perhaps I shall go right on. Give me a room where I can be quiet for a few moments."

The traveller's tone did not encourage conversation. The innkeeper hastened to get lights and conduct this dignified newcomer to his apartments. As they mounted the staircase they found themselves face to face with Ménard, who was descending majestically, declaiming his opening lines:—

“To my vows Fortune is no more opposed,
Madame, and in my arms and —”

The little old gentleman looked up on hearing the voice of Ménard. He gazed, stared in astonishment, and at length exclaimed, —

“Is it possible! Do I see Monsieur Ménard in such a garb as this?”

Ménard looked at the traveller, and stood transfixed with horror. It was the Count of Montreville, Frederic's father. His eyes sparkled with anger; he took Theseus by the arm and drew him unceremoniously into his chamber. There he placed himself judicially before him and began to interrogate him with much severity.

“What does all this mean, Monsieur Ménard? Why is this turban stuck on your head? and why do you wear this yellow dress? It makes you look like an escaped convict.”

“Count, yellow is not a shameful color. In China yellow coats and peacock feathers are marks of distinction.”

“Heavens, monsieur! let the Chinese alone, and answer me. Why are you thus attired?”

“My dear sir, it is because I play Theseus this afternoon.”

“You play Theseus?”

“Yes, Count; I take that part in the performance of ‘Phèdre’ which is about to be given.”

“Do you mean to say that you, a respectable tutor, are playing in a comedy at the theatre?”

"Well, what will you have, sir? Circumstances sometimes compel us; besides, Roscius was a friend of Sylla, Garrick is buried at Westminster, and Molière —"

"Do you think that you are the equal of such men, monsieur? Did I put you in charge of my son, that you might become a comic actor? Did you undertake this journey for such a purpose? Could you think, like Frederic, that I would long be your dupe? You wasted the eight thousand francs that I sent you in only fifteen days —"

"We did not waste them, monsieur."

"Silence, monsieur! I preferred to pardon this first folly. I sent money, and I learned that, instead of continuing your travels, you remained at Grenoble. Apparently my son intended to make the tour of Europe in Dauphiny."

"The country is superb, monsieur."

"I left Paris; I wished to see for myself what kept you in this country. I went to Grenoble; I did not find you; I sought you in vain in all the neighborhood. At last I find you here, in this costume! I did not expect it, I confess. But my son, — where is he? Has he gone upon the stage also?"

"No, monsieur! No, Count!"

"Well, where is he? Speak!"

"He is lost, dear Count!"

"Lost! What do you mean? Answer me, monsieur!"

"I mean, sir, that he has gone away, and I don't know where he is."

"Do you realize, monsieur, that I put my son in your care?"

"We will find him, sir; his excellency, the Baron Potoski, will send couriers to all the courts of Europe."

"And who is the Baron Potoski?"

"He is a Polish seigneur, a very learned young man. He is palatine of Rava and Sandomir, and he has a superb château on Mount Krapach, which is heated with gas."

"Oh, great Heavens, Monsieur Ménard! I believe they have made you a complete imbecile."

"No, monsieur; I know what I am talking about, and I speak only the truth."

"Where did you find this baron?"

"We met him en route, near Paris; by the way, he overturned our carriage, and I rolled in the ditch! But your son found an old friend in the Baron Potoski. We got into King Stanislas' coach, where I sat in the place of a princess of Hungary, and since then we have travelled with the baron."

The Count of Montreville strode about the room, stamping his feet with violence, and lifting his eyes to Heaven. Ménard stood in a corner, holding his turban in his hand, and not daring to budge. After stamping about for some time, the Count turned to him.

"And what has become of the baron?"

"He plays Hippolyte, sir; he is on the stage at this moment. But wait, Count; there he comes now."

At that instant, indeed, Dubourg entered the room in very lively fashion, crying, —

"Hurry, hurry, Theseus! They are waiting for you for the third act."

But he stopped motionless on seeing the Count, who exclaimed, —

"I was sure of it! It's that worthless fellow, Dubourg!"

At these words Ménard opened his eyes wide, and Dubourg contented himself with making a profound bow to Frederic's father.

"Come on, Monsieur Ménard; follow me," concluded the Count. "Take off this costume, that you have no business to be wearing, and let us go."

The poor tutor did not wait for a repetition of this order. In a moment he had thrown his yellow tunic and trousers far from him. He put on his coat, took his hat, and stood humbly waiting for the Count's next orders. Dubourg waited also, and the Count said to him, —

"As to you, monsieur, your society has been so profitable to my son, that you should realize that if I do not soon find Frederic my anger will fall on you! Follow me, Monsieur Ménard."

In a moment the Count and the tutor were in

the carriage, from which the horses had not yet been unharnessed. They rapidly left the inn, and turned toward Grenoble, where the Count hoped to get some news of his son.

Dubourg was at first a little stunned by what had happened, but he began to think immediately of what might ensue. The audience waited for Theseus, without whom nothing could be done; and the public in Voreppe did not seem to take a disappointment amiably. On the other hand, he had received from the director the money for himself and for Ménard, and, since Ménard was gone, how could the engagement be kept?

While he considered this difficulty a confused noise was heard in the street. Dubourg ran to the window and saw Floridor coming with a little crowd from the audience, who were swearing and making a great noise. They declared that the Poles should either play or take a beating, and Floridor cried, —

“They will play, gentlemen! they will play! I have paid them in advance.”

Dubourg saw the danger which threatened him, and considered whether he should return the money and excuse himself for the departure of his comrade, or whether he should leave the director to settle matters with the public. This last decision pleased him best. Even if he returned the money, he feared he might be roughly treated; and, besides, he was convinced that the

sum he had received was by no means an equivalent for the superior acting he had given.

The noise and the crowd increased outside; the whole town seemed to be in the court. Dubourg hesitated no longer, but ran to another window in the room, which looked out on the fields. He jumped, fell upon the sorrel underneath, rose, wrapped his mantle about his body, and ran across the fields as if the entire city was at his heels.

The Count and Ménard arrived in a short time at Grenoble and stopped at the inn where the three travellers had stayed. The Count had asked the tutor about it, during the journey. He had also made other inquiries, and the responses he received enabled him easily to understand that it was a love affair which kept Frederic in the neighborhood, which relieved the Count's anxiety, for he did not doubt that his presence would be sufficient to restore his son to reason.

When they arrived at the inn Ménard had a scene with the landlord over the wagonette that had not been returned. He spoke also of Dubourg, and said that one of his creditors had come to Grenoble in search of him, and meant to have him arrested.

Poor Ménard had not a word to say. He was confounded to realize that the man he had believed to be a Polish nobleman had been making game of him all the time they travelled together.

The Count of Montreville put an end to the inn-keeper's talk by paying him what he asked. The travellers slept at Grenoble, and it was the Count's intention to go next day with Ménard to the neighborhood where he had left Frederic. But the next morning, as the Count was ready to set forth, Ménard uttered a cry of joy, saying,—

“There he is, Count! The sheep has returned to the fold, the child is restored to his father! Let us kill the fatted calf! There is your son!”

It was indeed Frederic who entered the inn, but he was far from suspecting that his father was there.

The Count left, the carriage quickly, followed by Ménard. He approached his son with an air of severity, and the young man lowered his eyes and appeared overcome at finding himself in the presence of his father.

“I have found you at last, monsieur,” said the Count. “I have heard news of you. I have seen the companion of your pleasures. I have learned that you ended your travels in a wood—in a wretched village. You think, no doubt, that you have sufficient culture; but I will not reproach you. I deserve everything, for having given you such a companion as this gentleman. Let us forget it all and go on.”

Frederic bore his father's reproaches with courage, but these last words pierced his heart. He could scarcely maintain his composure, he seemed

overwhelmed. He looked about him and behind him, and, stammering, begged his father for the delay of a day or two ; but the Count pretended not to hear, and repeated, in a tone of severity, —

“ My son, I am waiting for you.”

The carriage was ready : what could he do ? He hesitated still, but the Count took him by the hand, led him toward the carriage, and he dared not resist. He had been given no time for reflection, and the carriage carried him rapidly away from Grenoble. He put his head out to look back at Vizille, and sighed deeply. His eyes moistened with tears as he thought of Sister Anne, and he said to himself repeatedly, —

“ Poor little thing ! what will she think ? ”

CHAPTER II

THE PLEASURES OF LOVE LAST ONLY A MOMENT; THE SORROWS OF LOVE ENDURE FOR A LIFETIME

WHY is the love that endures for a month so different to that of a day, and why is that of a year less ardent and vivid than that of a month? Why do we enjoy so indifferently that which we possess in the fullest abundance, and why do we sometimes cease altogether to enjoy that which a short time before we so ardently desired? It is because all is transitory in this world of shadows in which we are ourselves but passing strangers; it is because men are eager for pleasure and are constantly seeking for something new, and because for many of them love is merely a passing distraction.

But, you will say to me, perhaps, I have myself been married for more than three months, and I am sure that I love my wife now quite as dearly as I loved her on our marriage day; or perhaps you will say, my lover has adored me for six months and now loves me better than ever, I am sure of that; but then there are always exceptions to every rule, and each one can quote it in regard to his own case; finally, I did not tell you that love

takes his flight; I only know that, as time passes, he changes his tint, and, unfortunately, the last shades have not the brilliancy nor the charm of the primitive color.

Undoubtedly Frederic still loved the pretty dumb girl; however, he had been living with her in the woods for three weeks, and he began to feel the life there a little weary and monotonous. But lovers almost invariably make the grave mistake of giving themselves too completely to the intoxication of pleasure in the first days of their happiness. In this they resemble the gourmands who sit down to the table with a great appetite for the good things that are before them, but who eat so fast that they are sated before the repast is half finished.

Sister Anne, however, did not as yet feel this weariness; indeed, if the truth be told, she was happier than ever, more loving and affectionate when near her adored Frederic. But in general the love of women is deeper, sincerer, more lasting than that of the other sex, and, besides, her affliction and her solitary condition set the poor little orphan apart from ordinary women. Frederic was more than her lover, he was all the world to her, he was her universe; since she had known him her mind had been formed, her soul had been elevated. She had for the first time learned to think, to reflect, to form desires, to fear, to hope, to love; a thousand new sensa-

tions had made her heart beat. Before she knew love, her existence had been only a dream; but Frederic had awakened her.

When she saw that he was sorrowful, preoccupied, she redoubled her attentions and caresses. She would run out, drawing him into the wood, disappear for a moment from his eyes, and conceal herself among the shrubberies, or in a clump of trees, whence she would emerge suddenly and throw herself into his arms. This sweet and childish grace added greatly to the charm of her beauty.

When night fell they returned to the garden of the hut. Sister Anne, light and active, prepared in a moment their evening repast, which they did not take until old Marguerite had gone to her rest. The young mute gathered fruits, brought milk and black bread; and then, sitting down near Frederic, she fed him with her own hand, selecting what she thought was the best and most beautiful of her store.

When her lover spoke she listened with delight. It was evident that the accents of Frederic penetrated even to her heart; once he sang a tender little ballad for her, and the young girl, motionless, attentive, fearing to lose a single sound, signed to him to repeat the song. From that time her greatest pleasure was to hear Frederic sing. He had a sweet, flexible voice, and she would pass the entire day in listening to him.

It was thus that Sister Anne sought to captivate

her beloved. There was none of the cleverness of the coquette in her spell: it was simply love, and that alone; while in all that the coquette plans there is not a grain of the mighty passion.

Why are we such imbeciles that we allow ourselves to be taken in the snares of the one, and repay the sincere love of the other with coldness?

It is because the coquette knows how to hold us by a breath. She sees that we are well smitten, and she cruelly lays her plans: if we are a little cold, she reanimates us by the titillation of jealousy; if we are too confident, her raillery awakens our fears; when we are repelled and ready to break away, she becomes tender, sensitive, passionate, and with a word brings us to her knees. These continual changes do not allow the heart time to grow cold.

I was about to compare men to the gourmands, whose appetites are sharpened by variety of dishes, but I pause; it might be suspected that I had studied the art of loving in the royal kitchen.

Frederic at length began to make little excursions in the neighborhood. Sister Anne was alarmed at first, but he soon returned, and her fears disappeared. Frederic began to think of the future, of his father. What would the Count of Montreville say if he knew that his son was living in the midst of a wood, with a young villager? This thought came often to trouble the repose of

Frederic, and as time passed it returned with increasing vividness.

Sometimes he said to himself, "If my father should see this young girl, it would be impossible for him not to love her." But would he give her to his son as a wife? No, that was not probable. The Count of Montreville was not in the least romantic; he was proud; he loved wealth, opulence, because he knew that money always adds to the dignity of position. It was not to be hoped that he would allow his son to marry a penniless villager.

Of course, it could be done without his consent; but in that case he must renounce his fortune, work for a living, and learn to use his talents. In any case he must leave the wood; for Frederic began to feel that it was not common sense for a young man of twenty-one to fly from the world, and that the possession of a pretty wife was no reason for burying her in the depths of a forest.

From day to day these reasons gained more force. When Frederic was not with Sister Anne these thoughts filled his mind, and his absences became longer each day. The poor little girl groaned over the change. She counted the minutes that she passed away from her lover; she ran into the valley, to see if he was returning, and the corners of her mouth fell sorrowfully when he was a long time away. But it was such a joy to

see him again that her sorrow passed quickly. She forgot all her anxieties when he pressed her against his heart.

A month rolled away. Dubourg and Ménard had not returned to inquire about Frederic, and this astonished him greatly. He did not know, as we do, that his two travelling companions were then established with their friend Chambertin, who had prepared that fiery surprise which enabled him to see what we know well, but which he did not know at all, and in fact never did know, for his wife persuaded him that he had seen nothing but smoke.

Frederic did not understand at all the indifference of his friends, especially that of Ménard. He said to himself, "They have had some new adventure; Dubourg must have committed some new folly. I did wrong to give him all the money."

The result of these reflections was always the conviction that he must go to Grenoble and find out what these gentlemen were doing. But how could he face Dubourg, after telling him that he wished never to leave the wood, that he turned his back upon a false and perverse world, and that none of its pleasures were worth the tranquillity to be found in a little cottage. This prospect of recantation seemed embarrassing, and prevented Frederic's visit to the town; sometimes a man would rather persevere in a folly than acknowledge he has committed it.

But constant idleness weighed upon Frederic. With the best intentions, it is impossible to talk to a pretty woman for twenty-four hours at a stretch without weariness. The poor little girl saw that her friend was no longer happy, and sighed often; her own joy was therefore shadowed. At last, one beautiful evening, Frederic could endure his weariness and anxiety no longer; he said to his companion, —

“Tomorrow, at daybreak, I shall go to Grenoble to find some news of my friends.” The young girl remained a moment immovable, as if struck by an unexpected blow; then her breast heaved, and two rivers of tears escaped from her eyes. She extended her arms toward the village road, then folded them over her bosom, as if to say, —

“And me, — you will leave me?”

The poor girl could not beg her lover to stay; she could not use those sweet and tender words so difficult to resist. But how expressive were her gestures, and how eloquent her eyes! They spoke all her thoughts, so that words became unnecessary.

“I will return to you,” said Frederic; “I promise you I will return, and I will never love any but you.”

These words softened the anguish of Sister Anne, for she never dreamed of doubting her lover’s promises. Remember, dear ladies, Sister

Anne did not know the world. This is sometimes a very painful knowledge, since it teaches us to renounce the illusions of the heart.

The evening passed sorrowfully ; for, though she did not doubt the return of her lover, the idea of his departure seemed cruel to this burning soul. Sister Anne had learned to know happiness for the first time in loving, and she felt sure it must last till the end of life.

Frederic did all he could to console her, but in giving new proofs of love a lover makes himself more beloved. Is this, then, a good means of softening the pain of separation ? At least it is the one usually employed.

The day opened very sombrely to the eyes of the young orphan. Can that day be beautiful which separates us from the one we love best ? Frederic mounted a hill upon his route, holding in his hands the trembling palms of his little sweetheart. He parted from her there, after he had renewed his promises, and made the most tender adieux. He turned from her at last and disappeared from the eyes of his beloved.

What a weight fell upon the heart of the young girl ! She could no longer see Frederic ! But she stood there, her eyes sought him still. All at once she looked about her, a groan escaped her, she fell upon her knees near an old oak. She kissed it with reverence. Poor little one ! she was on the very spot where her mother died watching

for her father! She recognized the place, and, joining her hands, implored Heaven's kindness, and besought the blessing of her mother's spirit.

Sister Anne went several times a year to watch and pray under the old oak where the unhappy Clotilda died; but she had never been there with Frederic. On this day they had gone over the hill, because the path led into the village road. Sister Anne, absorbed in her sorrow, had not noticed it.

Poor little one! What a melancholy presentiment weighed suddenly upon her heart! She thought of her mother; she said to herself, "Alas! shall I be as unhappy as she was?"

She must go back to the cabin; old Marguerite might be in need of her care. Sister Anne slowly left the hill; several times she looked back at the old oak and sighed. He had left her there! Like her mother, she will come back each day to this spot and wait for his return.

She saw again her cottage, her woods, her goats; she returned to her accustomed work, she took up her ordinary habits;—but everything was changed to her eyes. The wood seemed sorrowful to her, and everything wearied her; her garden had lost its charm, her dwelling was a desert. Frederic had been the ornament of all, and Frederic was no longer there. Before she knew him, her eyes had fallen with pleasure upon surroundings which were now indifferent to her; these



objects had not changed, but she had lost peace, repose, and nothing had for her the same charm.

Frederic had not said how long he would be away, and Sister Anne hoped to see him soon; she did not know that he had met his father at Grenoble, and that the Count had taken him to Paris.

Each day Sister Anne returned to the hill with her goats, and her eyes were fixed unceasingly on the village road. She longed to see Frederic, as poor Clotilda had longed to see her husband, years ago. She amused herself by writing her lover's name in the earth, with a little stick. This was all he had taught her, but she was fond of tracing the word, and had done it so often with Frederic that she had learned to write it legibly.

Several days rolled away, and Frederic had not returned. Sister Anne did not lose hope, because she could not believe that her lover would fail to keep his promise. Every morning when she went up the hill she said, "Today, surely, he will come back with me." Vain hope! She must again return alone to her cottage, to that dwelling whence repose had fled, since love had entered in.

But a new sentiment came to add at least variety to her sufferings. Sister Anne carried within her bosom the pledge of her love to Frederic. She had been so truly his wife that it was fitting she should become a mother. In her simplicity, she had not thought of this, but suddenly the significance of it struck her spirit; then a new

joy rose in her heart. She fed on this hope with rapture. She would have a child! Frederic's child! It seemed to her that she loved it already. This idea transported her. What happiness to be a mother! And what a joy it would be to tell Frederic this precious secret!

The young girl ran dancing about the wood. In her delight she committed a thousand follies; she looked at herself in the waters of the brook; she studied herself in the fountain; she began to be proud of her motherhood, and did not shrink at all from its visible evidence. Poor little one, whose every action proved the innocence of her mind! Let her rejoice in the delirium of this new sentiment born in her heart. That, at least, she will never lose.

But time was passing, and Frederic did not return. Sister Anne had the certainty of being a mother, and she could not share this joy with her lover. There must always be pain mingled with pleasure, and the joy of the young girl was poisoned by the anxiety she suffered because of the absence of her adored one; each day the old oak was a witness of her sighs and her tears.

CHAPTER III

THE BIG BEAST

WE left our worthy acquaintance Dubourg running across the fields in order to escape the theatrical manager, the excited and angry public, and the raw potatoes of which poor Phèdre had received such a sorry taste. We must not forget that in the ardor of his rapid flight he had not had time to doff the costume of Hippolyte. His head was still buried under the immense Louis Fourteenth perruque, which fell in great curls upon his neck and over his shoulders, and his body was still enveloped in the rabbit-skin cloak.

Dubourg ran for at least an hour, crossing the roads, jumping the ditches, walking through the standing grain and across the ploughed fields, leaping over the hedges, and all this without knowing where he was or where he was going to; for we must remember that it was in the middle of the evening that he had begun his flight, and consequently it was now night, and as the rain fell in torrents the moon did not show its light to guide his steps; however, his only concern was to put himself at as great a distance as possible from his pursuers.

Dubourg stopped at last, and listened, but heard nothing to indicate that he was followed. The most profound silence reigned about him. He tried to get the points of the compass, to find out where he was. No longer afraid of being taken, he felt the need of repose; but in autumn the nights are cool, and our hero did not care to pass the night in the open fields, with the rain on his back, although his perruque served as a hat, and his mantle was a better protection than an umbrella. But in the end these garments would become soaked, and he would be very uncomfortable. He must therefore find a shelter.

He knew that he was walking in a vegetable field, and, going on, he encountered a hedge, high enough to bar his passage; but the protecting mantle saved him from pricks. He thrust his leg through, crept a little, left some shreds of rabbit fur and some locks of his perruque among the bushes, and finally found himself on the other side, although he knew no better than before where he was. He distinguished several trees, some pots of flowers and a trellis; and these objects led him to think that he must be in a garden. He walked about, his hands stretched out before him, and at last touched an expanse of wall. Presently he found himself beneath a roof, then he was stopped by some bundles of hay and straw. He was under a shed, which no doubt served as a protection to the fodder.

"Zounds!" exclaimed Dubourg, "I've found just what I want for the night; here's a good shelter from the rain; I'll stretch out on these bundles of straw, wrap myself in my mantle, and go to sleep. Tomorrow I'll think about my affairs."

Dubourg soon arranged his couch. He was very comfortable under the shed, and, blessing the chance that had brought him to this asylum, was soon sound asleep.

The outhouse under which Dubourg slept was at the end of a garden; but this garden contained also a pretty little house, where lived Bertrand the farmer, who seven years before had married one of the villagers of the hamlet. She was a fresh, alert woman, and was called the beautiful Claudine. The pair had two lusty children, and Claudine was willing the family should be larger.

In the country early rising is the rule. Fanfan and Marie, the farmer's two children, respectively four and five years old, were up at dawn, and after they had eaten their bread and milk ran out as usual to play in the garden.

In their play they approached the shed, and what did they see on the straw? Imagine Azor in "Beauty and the Beast," and you will have an idea of Dubourg. His face was entirely concealed by a profusion of chestnut red curls, which fell to his breast. His entire body was hidden by a mantle, which if not a tiger's skin, was that of

some other animal. Imagine the children's terror when they saw this enormous mass.

Little Marie let fall the buttered cake she held in her hand, the little boy opened his mouth to its widest extent, and could not close it, for he was almost petrified with terror.

"Oh, oh, brother! what do you see?" cried Marie, pressing close to him, and pointing to the object on the straw.

"Oh, oh! how ugly it is!" exclaimed Fanfan, slipping behind his sister.

Then the two children fled to the house, shrieking loudly, which did not waken Dubourg, because the fatigues of the previous day had been so great that he slept like the dead.

Bertrand had just kissed his Claudine, and was about to set out for his work in the fields, when the children rushed in; their faces were convulsed with fright, and they were shrieking loudly.

"What's the matter?" cried the father. "Speak, you little rascals!"

The children were so terrified that at first they could not utter a word. At last they both cried in the same breath,—

"Down there! under the shed, a big beast all hairy, on the straw, with a black head, and a red mane; it's bigger than our donkey. Oh, but it's ugly!"

"Do you understand what it's all about?" Bertrand asked his wife.

"They're talking about a big beast, my man!"

"Good Lord! there's none but us in the house. How could it have got in? It must be Neighbor Gervais' bull, or Dame Catherine's donkey."

"No, papa; it's all gray and all red! Oh, it's awful!"

"The devil! What are you talking about?"

"Has it a tail?" asked Claudine.

"Gracious, mamma! I don't know. The beast seemed to be asleep, and we ran home just as fast as we could."

"We'd better go and see — hadn't we, my man?"

"Yes, yes; we must go."

But Bertrand, who was not very brave, was already trembling a little, and he prudently went to get his gun, which was loaded with salt. Claudine took a broom, the children their sticks, and thus armed they all went toward the outhouse. The children led the van, for, although they were afraid, they were of an age to love the extraordinary. Bertrand walked beside his wife, who pushed him to make him go forward. The nearer they approached the shed, the more slowly they advanced, and the children were especially warned to make no noise, because it would be much better to see the beast asleep than awake.

At last they approached the little building, and the children cried, with startled voices, —

"Look? There he is, down there!"

Bertrand and Claudine stretched their necks; they saw the frightful object, but dared not approach it nearer; the husband turned pale and stepped closer to his wife, who signed to the children not to go near it.

"Let us go and seek for help," said Bertrand at last, in a half-stifled voice.

"If you would only take aim at him from behind, my man?"

"Yes, but my gun's unfortunately only loaded with salt, which couldn't kill him. It would only wake him up, and then he'd be furious and might jump on us."

"Oh, yes, that's true! You mustn't shoot! Let us run quickly to the village! Come, children! O mon Dieu what if the monster should wake up?"

Bertrand, who was already in advance, ran as though the beast were pursuing him. He hastened to the village, which was only a gunshot from his house, and was soon joined there by Claudine. Both told everywhere of the wonderful and terrifying animal that had been found in their garden, and with that feeling of exaggeration which fear always induces, they declared that the beast they had seen was about the size of a bull; and as adventures always grow greater and greater in the telling, as each one adds to what he has heard, so the bull presently became a camel, the

camel was changed to a lion, the lion to an elephant, and they would have gone still farther had they known of a more enormous animal.

The fact remained, however, that there was an extraordinary beast in Bertrand's garden, and in a moment this news had set the village in a turmoil. The people ran from all sides to talk it over. The wives called their husbands from the fields; the mothers sent their little children into the house, and forbade them to go out. Everybody hurried to the mayor, who was a good farmer like his constituents, and who declared that he knew no more about beasts than the other citizens of his town. But there was in the district a man of some pretension named Latouche, who had been a deputy in Paris, and who liked to pass for a man of culture, a wit, a practical joker and a savant. They went in search of Latouche, who was engaged in trying to discover a process for preserving fruits without sugar, and they informed him of the event which had put all the village in a stir.

Latouche listened with a serious air, pinched his chin solemnly, and made them repeat the slightest details several times, and, after he had reflected a long while, finally said, —

“Well, we'll have to go and see what it is.”

Everybody repeated, “That's right! that's so! Let's go and see this beast!”

“When I have seen it,” said Latouche, “I will

tell you exactly what it is, and from what region it comes. I ought to know, for I have studied botany, and I have a cousin who is under-porter in the Museum of Natural History at Paris."

They all prepared for the visit to Bertrand's house, each man arming himself with what he could find, and even the women taking picks or rakes, because the beast might be dangerous. The mayor joined the crowd, and Latouche, who was the only one in the neighborhood who had a gun in good condition, — for Bertrand's could carry only a load of salt, — took upon himself to direct the campaign which was to follow.

They left the village, men, women, boys and girls, and marched on, talking over the great event; but the nearer they approached Bertrand's house, the less desire they seemed to have for conversation. Soon terror took possession of them so completely that the silence became general, and they advanced in a closer column, each one seeking to draw courage from the eyes of the man or woman next him.

Latouche walked in front, his gun on his shoulder, giving orders as if he expected to surprise an enemy's post. As they approached the hedge of the garden Bertrand uttered a cry, and concealed himself behind a great rock, exclaiming, —

"There he is!"

Immediately all the peasants made a backward

movement, and Latouche threw himself into the centre of the battalion ; but at length, hearing no noise, they approached to find the object which had frightened Bertrand. It was a red cat that had passed along the hedge.

"Zounds, Bertrand !" cried Latouche, hurrying to regain his place in the van. "Do you know that you are a terrible coward? It's shameful to show so little courage at your age!"

"Oh, yes, it's true," said Claudine. "He's an awful coward. I have to scold him all the time about it."

"To scream and make an outcry about a cat!"

"Damn it, Monsieur Latouche! I saw something slipping along the wall, and it was red, and I thought —"

"And perhaps it's nothing but a bagatelle that has set all the village by the ears, and interrupted me in my chemical experiments."

"Oh, no! that's no trifle! You'll soon see that it's worth the trouble. There it is, under the shed! Do you want to go through this little door? Then you'll be right there."

"No; let's go in by the house first, so that we can examine the beast from a distance."

They followed the advice of Latouche, and, entering Bertrand's house, went from there into the garden. As they approached the shed the most courageous turned pale, and some of the women dared go no farther. Latouche, who was

like those swaggering fellows who whistle to keep up their courage, gave orders right and left, but was careful to keep in the background himself.

"There he is! there he is!" cried several villagers at last, and they pointed out Dubourg to the others. He had remained in the same position because he was still sound asleep. Terror was painted on every face; but it was mingled with curiosity, and each person stretched his neck, or leaned forward, or climbed on his neighbor's shoulder. Latouche at once ordered a halt, and from all sides these exclamations were heard:—

"Oh, but it's ugly!" "Oh, but it's horrible!" "What a head!" "Look at its body!"

"You don't see its eyes!" cried some. "Nor its paws!" said others.

"Hush! hush!" warned Latouche. "Don't talk so loud; you'll wake it up. Wait till I examine it. Friends! have you ever heard of the famous beast which ravaged Gévaudan?"

"No, no!" cried the villagers.

"Well, this one seems to me to be very much like that. You don't see its feet, because, after the fashion of the Turks, this monster has them crossed under him. As to its eyes, they're turned toward the straw, which is fortunate for us, because there's often a deadly poison in them. The more I look at the skin and the mane, yes, I'm sure it's a sea lion, and it has come to us from Normandy."

"A sea lion," cried the peasants. "Is that dangerous?"

"Well, pretty much so! It would eat a man as easily as it would an oyster."

"O mon Dieu! but what shall we do? How shall we catch it?"

"But may be it's dead," said Claudine. "It hasn't changed its position since morning."

"Dead! Good gracious! But who'll find out?"

"Suppose you fire the gun," said the mayor.

"Yes, but that's taking a great deal of risk. The ball often glides off the skin of these animals."

"Pull its ear."

"You must see it to do that."

"All the same," said the mayor, "we must take this animal, alive or dead. Aim well, fire! And the rest of us, myself and the bravest, will make a rampart with our picks. And, good Lord, if the beast comes on, we'll give him a hot reception."

The mayor's little speech restored the courage of the villagers, who formed a line with lifted picks, and were ready to strike. Latouche, although he did not like his duty, decided to pull the trigger. He placed himself behind the line, and, passing the gun between two peasants, he adjusted it, and, after taking aim for five minutes, at last banged away, and the gun missed fire.

This was very fortunate for Dubourg, who did not dream what danger threatened him.

The mayor was broken-hearted. Latouche did not wish to try again, the crowd stood motionless, when suddenly our sleeper made a movement, and, turning over, gave a very audible yawn, that was taken for a roar by the bystanders. The bravest immediately dropped their weapons and fell back. They crowded, they pressed against each other, they thought only of their fright, and thus each one pushed the man or woman next him, to make way for himself. The boys tumbled over the girls, and the women dragged off the men. Latouche climbed a tree, Bertrand knocked over the mayor, the most agile jumped over the hedge, and the heaviest crawled underneath, in trying to get away. Claudine fell head over heels, as did several of the other women, and in the disorder the skirts of these ladies flew higher than is usually customary in broad daylight. But no one paid the slightest attention, for nothing could have stopped the flight of the terror-stricken crowd. When great events are happening, the most fascinating details are not noticed.

Dubourg was completely awakened by all this noise. He rubbed his eyes, and began to free himself from his perruque, which prevented him from seeing clearly, and then from his mantle, which stifled him. He rose, for he heard cries, groans, words which he did not understand — in fact, an

uproar, of which he was far from suspecting the cause. He left the shed, advanced, and then stopped, struck by the picture which presented itself to his eyes. There was much cause for astonishment in it, although in the confusion he saw some very agreeable things. He walked on, saying to himself, —

“I don’t know what fly has stung these people, but this is evidently a place where they have an unusual manner of receiving strangers. It should be an easy matter to make acquaintances here.”

As the roaring of the animal was no longer heard, the boldest one among the villagers ventured, little by little, to look back. He saw Dubourg’s face, — although Dubourg could perceive only a mixture of legs and arms in the picture before him, — and the stranger’s aspect was anything but frightful, when he was freed from the cursed perruque.

“Look! look!” cried the peasant. “Who is that man, and where did he come from?”

At these words everyone turned and gazed at Dubourg, who, after gallantly pulling down Claudine’s skirt, and helping her to rise, replied to the mayor, who had repeated the peasant’s question, —

“I’m a poor devil, an honest man, surely. I got lost in the storm last night, and didn’t know where to go; so I took the liberty of sleeping on

these bundles of straw. I've slept like a trooper, and I hope I've done no harm to anyone."

"Did you sleep in this outhouse?" said the mayor.

"Certainly."

"And you weren't eaten by the big beast!" cried Bertram.

"What big beast?"

"Why, the hairy beast! The beast with red hair, that slept there."

Dubourg turned, saw his perruque and mantle, and, understanding the cause of the peasants' terror, yielded to laughter, which for some moments he could not repress. The villagers began to lose their fear when they heard laughter. The fugitives paused, those who had gone farthest returned, and the women rose and readjusted their clothing. Everyone looked at Dubourg, awaiting an explanation, while he went back to the shed, took his mantle in one hand, his perruque in the other, and returned to the group.

"My friends," he said, "here is the beast that has frightened you so much. Take what vengeance you please."

As he concluded, he threw the perruque and mantle on the ground, and the peasants approached, laughing with Dubourg, and handling the objects, while they said, —

"What! was it that? O mon Dieu! what fools we were!"

Then Latouche descended from the pear-tree, into which he had climbed, and exclaimed, —

“I told you that imbecile Bertrand had no more courage than a hare. He told us a silly yarn, and took a hazelnut for an ox. Now see if I was right.”

“Pardi!” cried Bertrand; “seems to me that nut story gave you a pretty big panic, for you climbed a tree like a cat, and you ran so fast you knocked Claudine over.”

“Shut up!” exclaimed Latouche, who had turned as red as a turkey cock at Bertrand’s response. “Shut up! I climbed the tree so that I could get a better view of the so-called animal.”

“But you threw down your gun.”

“You mean I dropped it.”

“Never mind, never mind,” said Dubourg; “I am the cause of all this trouble. Truly, under this mantle and perruque I must have been frightful from a distance. The bravest people do not always like to encounter a savage beast. I am sure Monsieur Latouche was very courageous when he ventured to fire on me.”

This adroit little speech flattered everybody, and Latouche was restored to good humor.

“This stranger expresses himself very well,” he remarked. “He is certainly a savant.”

After the manner in which they had accepted his compliments, it only remained for Dubourg to announce himself a baron; but, since his en-

counter with M. Chambertin, he no longer cared to play the nobleman. The mayor asked him where he had come from in such a singular costume, and Dubourg immediately invented a story of thieves, who had attacked and pillaged him, stifled his cries with the perruque, and wrapped him in the mantle, probably intending to carry him to their cave, when the sound of horses approaching frightened them, and they fled, leaving him in the middle of the field.

This story interested the villagers greatly in favor of Dubourg. As soon as their fears were relieved, they found him delightful. The mayor made out an official report, and Latouche exclaimed, —

“I’ve said for a long time that there are thieves in this neighborhood! I’ve lost two chickens in the last eight days, and that’s not all! We must make a regular campaign, fellows! I’ll put myself at your head, and you know how I carry out plans! The mayor is going to call out the police, and we will begin as soon as they have finished.”

While they were waiting for the campaign, the people busied themselves with Dubourg, who was in need of refreshment; and the question was discussed as to who should entertain him for the next few days. Each villager generously offered him a coat to replace his mantle, and his house to stay in while he was in the neighborhood. Dubourg gave the preference to Bertrand, because

he had not forgotten the glance Claudine sent him when he helped her to rise. Bertrand's wife was much flattered by this honor. She courtesied, and as she courtesied she smiled, and this smile seemed to say many things. Dubourg felt that he already had reason to congratulate himself upon his conquest.

The mayor, as the foremost man of the district, had the pleasure of offering a good large woollen coat in place of the one the thieves had stolen from Dubourg. In return, he took possession of the famous mantle, which he thought he could make use of as a bed cover in winter. Monsieur Latouche received the perruque, which he had merited by his conduct in this affair.

At last they all went back to their work, some returning to their fields and some to their cottages. Bertrand had a great square of land to plough, and when he returned to his duty he charged his wife to take good care of monsieur while he was gone. Claudine promised, and kept her word. The handsome villager was active and obliging; she was determined to prove to the stranger that he had done well in giving her the preference, and she spared no pains to make him content. On his side, Dubourg wished to efface the terrible impression his appearance had made in the village, and we know that Dubourg had a talent for making himself popular with the ladies. It is not strange, therefore, that when Bertrand

returned from his work in the evening, his wife ran to meet him, saying, —

“Oh, ho, my man; we were big fools to be so afraid of this gentleman. He’s just like any other man — do you see? But he’s got lots more spirit than you!”

Dubourg, who was very well treated by the villagers, found it very agreeable to pass a little time with these good people, who wished by their attentions to make him forget his misfortunes; and he repaid his hosts by evening entertainments of story-telling. To the peasants, there was no gift like that of talking for hours of things interesting, frightful, and consequently amusing; Dubourg had this gift, and, when M. Latouche was present at his recitals, he would put in some words of Latin. The chemist, who did not understand any language but his own, would turn to the audience and say, —

“That’s all true. He’s just sworn to it in German!”

But at the end of two weeks Dubourg was weary of telling stories to the peasants in the evening, and making love to their wives in the morning. He determined to leave the village so as to get news of his companions; and, as he had still in his pocket the whole of the hundred francs he had gained by playing Hippolyte, he could make his journey without being disguised as a big beast. In spite of all Claudine could do to

persuade him, he decided to go. He thanked the mayor, Latouche, and all the citizens of the neighborhood, for the kind reception they had given him. He thanked Bertrand especially, and his wife not a little. Finally he started, holding in his hand a big knotted stick, which was a fit complement to the broad-brimmed hat and homespun coat. He said as he walked along, —

“Those who have seen me play the gentleman will not recognize me, and that is exactly what I want.”

Dubourg, however, thought it prudent not to go through Voreppe, where he might encounter M. Floridor or some member of his troupe. He did not wish to venture into Grenoble either, where M. Durosey might still be watching for him, and the eyes of a creditor are difficult to deceive. He turned in the direction of Vizille, where he hoped to find Frederic, or to get some news of him.

He walked along gayly, singing happily, and after a while sat down on the grass to eat the good things with which Claudine had stuffed his pockets, for women think of everything. Dubourg blessed the forethought of Madame Bertrand and said to himself, “How can I be melancholy when I have had proof a thousand times that these delightful creatures are interested in my fate? Let us drink to the health of Claudine, of Madame de Chambertin, of Goton, of the little Delphine,

and of many others, who have brought me pleasant hours, and have left me sweet memories."

He drank water from a brook, but he made the best of it. Besides, he had money, and could buy wine if he wished, which made the water more palatable. At the close of the day he approached Vizille, and said to himself, "If Monsieur le Comte has learned from Ménard of Frederic's love affair, he will have hunted him up in the wood, and I shall not find him there; but I shall see the pretty blonde, and she will tell me what has happened."

Dubourg did not know that the poor little thing could not speak. He crossed the valley, entered the wood, searched, called, at last saw the cottage. He entered, the garden was deserted, and he went into the tiny house, to find only old Marguerite asleep in her chair.

Dubourg left the cottage, astonished at not seeing the young girl. He feared that perhaps the story he had invented for Ménard had proved true, and that Frederic had taken the little one away with him. He started for the village to see if he could get any news of Sister Anne, but as he was crossing one of the forest pathways he saw her walking slowly toward her home.

The attitude of the young girl was so sorrowful, such a profound melancholy was painted upon her features, that Dubourg was much touched. He watched her for some moments, and said

to himself, "Poor little thing! he has gone, and he did not take you. It would have been better for you if you had never seen him."

Just then Sister Anne heard someone walking near her, she saw someone, and ran like lightning until she reached Dubourg, when she paused, and her features, which had been animated by hope, became once more clouded by suffering. She shook her head sorrowfully; it was not he. But when Dubourg spoke she looked at him with more attention, recognizing his voice, and joy filled her heart once more. This is a friend of Frederic's. He came once in search of him, and doubtless he has come again to tell her when Frederic will return. She approached him, her eyes full of questions, and waited with impatience until he should explain his presence. Dubourg was astonished, and asked her what had become of Frederic.

At the mention of Frederic's name she trembled. She pointed to the route he had taken, counted on her fingers the number of days that had elapsed since his departure, and seemed to ask whether he would return. From these signs Dubourg understood the pitiful state of Sister Anne, and he thought only of consoling her; but for her there was no consolation, no happiness, without Frederic.

"Poor girl!" said Dubourg. "He was right when he assured me she was not like any of

those he had known. But to leave her in this wood! Ah, that's wicked! Such grace! such charms! It is a crime! I have half a notion to take her to Paris!"

"Why didn't you follow him?" he asked her. "Who keeps you in this wood? Come with me, my child! We will find Frederic, or if we do not there are a thousand others who would be glad to take his place."

Sister Anne gazed at him in astonishment. She did not seem to understand him, but when he made a gesture as if to lead her with him, she withdrew from him swiftly. She pointed to the cottage and made him understand that it held someone she could not leave. Ah, if it had not been for Marguerite, with what eagerness she would have followed Dubourg, for she believed he would conduct her directly to the arms of her lover! But she never could abandon the aged woman who had cared for her in her childhood, and who had filled the place of her mother,—poor Marguerite, who was broken with age, and in need of the most constant care. Such a thought could not even tempt the young mute for a moment; ingratitude was a stranger to her heart.

"Very well," said Dubourg; "remain in the wood, then, poor little thing, and may you find peace and happiness here!"

The eyes of Sister Anne still questioned him.

"Yes, yes!" he said to her; "he will return; you will see him again. Dry your eyes. Soon, no doubt, soon, he will come and console you."

These words brought a ray of hope to the pale and melancholy face of the young mute, who smiled at Dubourg for making her this promise, and then, nodding adieu to him, returned to Marguerite.

Dubourg left the wood, and in spite of his carelessness he did not sing as he crossed the valley and regained the road. His heart was saddened by the image of this unfortunate girl, to whom he had given a hope which he feared would never be realized. He had never before been so touched, and for several leagues he thought of nothing but Sister Anne, repeating again and again, "Poor little thing! how she has suffered!"

But at last the recollection of his own affairs recalled him to his natural humor. He gave his coat and hat to an old-clothes man, and, having clothed himself more respectably at slight expense, prepared to take the road to Lyons, thence to return to Paris and his two companions.

CHAPTER IV

ILLUSIONS OF THE HEART. INCONSTANCY AND FIDELITY

THE post-chaise which carried our reluctant young lover to Paris went with the velocity of the wind towards its destination. The Count de Montreville, who was desirous of distracting his son from the regretful recollections with which his mind must be filled, was intensely impatient to reach the capital, hoping that the company of the young man's associates and the pleasures and occupations of the great city would have the desired effect.

The journey was made in almost complete silence. Frederic had no desire for conversation, his heart was with Sister Anne, and he had room for no other thought; his father, meanwhile, was reflecting on the best means of bringing his son to hear reason, and M. Ménard's memory reverted with indignation to all the falsehoods that had been poured out on him by the pretended Polish baron.

The Count, however, with the greatest magnanimity refrained from uttering a single reproach to Frederic, and appeared to have forgotten every

cause for displeasure, and Ménard, who had shrunk sensitively from the severe looks of M. de Montreville, because he knew that his conduct was not irreproachable, began to breathe more freely and dared to lift his head.

On their arrival in Paris, before M. Ménard could say farewell to the Count, Frederic found occasion to speak privately to him and asked him for news of Dubourg. Ménard kept silence for a moment, compressing his lips as if he did not know whether to be offended, and finally answered, with an air which he intended to be malicious, —

“Is it of the Baron Potoski that you wish to have news?”

“Of the Baron, of Dubourg, whatever you call him!”

“My faith, monsieur; I could call him a little impertinent, after all the lies he has told me. To say he was a palatine —”

“Never mind, dear Ménard; forget all that.”

“And the King of Prussia’s tobacco box!”

“That was just a joke.”

“But I counted specially on that Tokay of the cave of Tékély.”

“Remember, I was as guilty as he, in allowing him to deceive you.”

“It is that which closes my mouth, monsieur. Besides, outside of his thoughtlessness, and his passion for play, he is a man of merit. He is cultured, he knows his classics.”

"But what has become of him? Where did you leave him?"

"I left him playing Hippolyte, and coming in search of me to take my part in the scene."

Frederic understanding nothing of this, Ménard explained to him their adventures in the little town, at which any but the young man would have laughed heartily. But Frederic could only realize that Dubourg had been left in great embarrassment, and he could not imagine when he should see him again. This troubled him greatly, for he wished to send Dubourg to Sister Anne, to calm the anxieties of the young girl, and to give her news of himself.

The Count of Montreville gave M. Ménard a reasonable sum when he dismissed him, not for the manner in which he had watched over his son during their journey, but for the time he had lost. Ménard, on saying farewell to his dear pupil, reminded Frederic that he should like to be remembered, in case the latter should recommence his journey around the world.

Several days rolled away after Frederic's return to Paris. The memory of the young mute was with him constantly. He imagined her in the wood, waiting for his arrival, expecting his return, and broken-hearted at his abandonment. Each instant increased his torments and his desire to see Sister Anne. But what could he do? He dared not leave his father. He was without

money, and for the first time the steward had refused his request for funds, by order of the Count, who feared that his son would use the money to recommence his travels, and he did not wish to let him go.

Each day Frederic made the most extravagant plans. He would start on foot, he would run to join his young friend, and conceal himself with her in the depth of the forest. But Sister Anne could not leave Marguerite; they must therefore remain in the wood, and his father would find him easily, for Ménard had told him all.

What should he do? Write? Alas! the poor little girl did not know how to read; she knew nothing except how to love, and that counts for very little in the present century.

Frederic went rarely into society, for it displeased him. Pretty little Madame Dernange recommenced her enticements in vain. He paid not the slightest attention to her. She was piqued by his indifference, and employed all the resources of her coquetry to bring him again to her knees. But Frederic was no longer her dupe. He had known real love, and he recognized the flimsiness of all those sensations of vanity and of passionate excitement which can only be mistaken for love by those who have never experienced a real passion.

The Count treated his son with coldness, but he said not a word of his adventures in Dau-

phiny. On the contrary, he rather avoided the subject. Frederic, who wished to ascertain his father's real feelings, ventured to speak of his stay at Grenoble, of the surroundings of that town, and of the pretty village of Vizille; but his father's only reply was a severe look, which closed his mouth and made it impossible for him to continue. Frederic had already gone twenty times to the various lodgings which Dubourg had occupied when in Paris, but no one had seen him. He sought Ménard and charged him to do everything possible to find Dubourg, thinking that he might have returned, but feared to present himself, because he dreaded to encounter M. de Montreville.

"And if I find him?"

"Send him to me immediately."

"Send him to you? Indeed I will not! Peste! The Count, your father, did not treat him very well when he saw him as Hippolyte. To be sure, the costume was very unbecoming."

"Tell him to write to me. Can't I see him outside, if he is afraid to come to the hotel? Am I to be a prisoner? O Monsieur Ménard, I cannot bear it any longer; every day increases my suffering; I must see her, at least I must have some news of her."

"Some news of whom?"

"Of her whom I adore, of her whom I have been forced to abandon to follow you."

"Oh, I understand: the little one in the wood. M. Dubourg told me you had taken her away and set her up in an establishment."

"Would to God I had, for if I had done so I should now be near her. Oh, dear Monsieur Ménard, if you were another sort of a man! But you are so good, so sympathetic; you love me; you will bring me back to life if you will but go to her and tell her that I love her more than ever."

"I am sorry, Count, but I will not go to her to tell her that or anything else. I will not encourage a passion of which your father disapproves. I have already much to regret in my negligence. I love you infinitely, and for that reason I will not help you to continue a culpable connection, which can lead to nothing. Monsieur, your father knows well what he is doing; he came just in time; we did nothing but foolishness, and I was the worst. His presence reëstablished the equilibrium. He removed you from temptation, which makes you suffer; but it is for the best. *Qui bene amat, bene castigat, experto crede Roberto.*"

Frederic returned home to think of Sister Anne and find a means of seeing her. If he had known she was to be a mother, if he had known that she carried in her breast the pledge of his love, nothing could have kept him in Paris. He would have gone, he would have braved the

anger of his father. But he knew nothing of all this, so he stayed, saying each day, "I will go."

The Count sent for his son to come to him, and Frederic entered his father's presence always with the same melancholy face.

"You do not go into society," the Count said. "Your travels have made you misanthropic."

Frederic was silent. It is better to be so when we do not know what to say.

"I wish you to accompany me this evening," went on the Count. "I am going to see one of my old army friends, General Valmont. He has been living for a long time on his estate in the country, but has now come to spend some time in Paris. He wishes to see you, and I should like to present you to him."

Frederic bowed, and prepared to follow his father; he had often heard him speak of this M. de Valmont, with whom he had been in the war, and who must be a man of about his own age, and found nothing unusual in the fact that his father wanted to present him to his old friend.

They started. The Count of Montreville was more amiable to his son, and Frederic endeavored to be less melancholy. The carriage stopped before the house of the old General. The Count and his son were announced, and M. de Valmont came out to receive them. The first impression of his face was very pleasing; his manner was full of geniality, and his features expressed frank-



ness and gayety; he ran to embrace his old friend, extended his hand to Frederic, pressed his with cordiality, and seemed charmed to see him.

After the first interchange of compliments, the General invited his guests to pass into an adjoining apartment.

"You've shown me your family," said he to the Count, "now I must show you mine. Perhaps you'll be astonished that such an old boy as I should have a family. She's not quite so close to me as yours, but she's just as dear."

As he said this the General led the Count and his son into another room, where a young lady was seated at the piano.

At the entrance of the strangers, she arose hastily.

"Constance," said the General to her, "this is the Count of Montreville and his son. Gentlemen, I wish to present to you my niece, my daughter; for I love her as much as if I were her father."

Constance made a courtesy to the two strangers which was full of grace. Frederic looked at her, and could not find her anything but charming. As to the Count, a smile of contentment irradiated all his features. I believe that the malicious old gentleman had already heard of Mademoiselle Constance, and that in making this little visit to the General with his son he had his own plans. Constance had a beautiful figure, and there was

something sweet and modest in her manner which was very attractive. Blonde, with just a little color in her cheeks, her great blue eyes, shaded by long black lashes, were indescribably charming; her expression was amiable and frank, all her movements were graceful, and she was quite unconscious of her charms; she had no desire to shine, but seemed to shrink from the admiration she aroused.

The two old friends opened the chapter of their wars and the adventures of their youth; and at sixty what a chapter this is! It fell to Frederic, therefore, to entertain the General's niece. However sorrowful a man's heart may be, he does not like to bore a pretty woman, and he makes an effort to forget his sorrows for the moment, so as not to appear too disagreeable. Our young gentleman followed this custom in chatting with Mademoiselle Constance, whom he found very agreeable, and without the least pretension; but it was evident that she was sensible and cultivated, and a great lover of the arts; her candor and modesty diffused a charm over all she said. She was not one of those young ladies who know everything, and who dispute and argue on every point, as so many do nowadays; she was not to be counted among the would-be prodigies who, with surprising assurance, babble for hours on subjects of which they really know nothing. It is the custom to admire them, because we like to

find everything charming that comes from a pretty mouth ; but, in reality, they have not even common sense.

God guard us from prodigies, dear reader, especially among women, whose most pleasing qualities are simplicity, modesty and naturalness, — qualities which do not exclude wit and learning, but rather add to them the gentleness which makes such women more attractive than any others.

The young people spoke of painting, of music, and of the country ; all at once the General said to his niece, —

“Sing something, Constance. Sit down to the piano, and let us hear you. I love singing, and it will amuse this young man.”

Constance did not wait to be asked again, but sat down with much simplicity and sang to her own accompaniment. Her voice was sweet and full of expression, though it lacked volume, but she sang with so much taste that one never tired of listening to her. Frederic was delighted ; he had never heard a voice that pleased him so greatly. Constance sang several pieces, until her uncle said to her, —

“That’s good ; that’s very good ! You are obedient, and you do not put on any airs. Zounds ! how I hate the affectations of young ladies who sing !”

The Count and his son were united in their

praises, and thanked Constance, who blushed at their compliments. They had been fully two hours at the General's house when the Count made his adieux.

"I will come and see you," said his friend. "I have just bought a little country house in the suburbs for mademoiselle, who sets me crazy with her fields and birds! I hope you will come out with your son, before the season is too far advanced."

The Count promised, and entered the carriage with Frederic, to whom he was very careful to say nothing about the General's niece, although the meeting with Constance would naturally have been the subject of a father's conversation; Frederic was not more communicative, for he was thinking anew of the poor little mute of the wood. For two hours he had almost forgotten her. Two hours;—that's a very little thing; but Sister Anne had never forgotten him for a single minute.

Three days after this visit the General came with his niece to dine with the Count of Montreville, who had invited quite a number of guests. When he learned that he was to meet Mademoiselle de Valmont again, Frederic experienced a slight emotion, which he attributed to vexation at being obliged to again conceal his sorrow. But was this the real cause?

The General was as usual gay, frank and un-

affected, his niece pretty, charming, and without pretensions. It is easier to be solitary in a large assemblage than in a small one, and Frederic remained near Constance, believing that he did so simply from courtesy, as it was his duty to pay especial attention to the General's niece; but he could not deny that of all the company Constance was the one who pleased him most, if he could still be pleased. With her one could chat without stopping to think what one must say; one never heard flat epigrams or commonplace phrases from her lips. Constance was not exclusively occupied with the toilets of other women. She did not pass them in review, one after the other, to criticise them, which is ordinarily the principal conversation of a young lady.

With her Frederic felt more free, more at his ease; it seemed to him that he had known her for a long time. She smiled upon him so pleasantly when he approached her, her voice had such a tender intonation, her eyes were so gentle, that it was very natural he should prefer her conversation to that of any of the others; even when he said nothing to her, he felt a secret charm in her presence. Frederic, who made an effort to repress his sadness, wore, nevertheless, a melancholy expression when he was near Constance which was very becoming. Women are often fascinated by such airs. When he was dreaming, Constance looked at him with interest, her eyes seeming to ask,

What makes you suffer? If she spoke to him at such a time, her voice became still sweeter, her manner more kind. A stranger who did not know them would have said she shared his sorrows, or wished to make him forget them.

Several young ladies had exhibited their talents and their voices, accompanying themselves on the harp or on the piano, but Frederic had heard only Mademoiselle de Valmont. She had sung merely a ballad, but she had sung it so well! Frederic regarded her more attentively than he had yet dared to do. Whether it was chance or an illusion of the heart, he found in the features of Constance a great resemblance to those of Sister Anne, — the same sweetness, the same expression; and if the poor orphan could have spoken, it would no doubt have been in a voice as tender and charming as that of Constance.

Frederic, listening to Constance, persuaded himself that he heard Sister Anne, and his eyes filled with tears. Full of this idea, he found a fresh resemblance of feature every moment, and he could not keep his eyes from Mademoiselle de Valmont. When she stopped singing, Frederic was again beside her, and in his glance, as it fell upon her, there was a new tenderness. Constance perceived it, she dropped her eyes, and a vivid scarlet colored her cheeks. But if Frederic saw only a little mute when he looked at Mademoiselle de Valmont so tenderly, would it not

have been more fair to warn her of the object which really occupied him? Otherwise Constance would have a right to believe that the son of the Count of Montreville did not regard her with indifference.

The evening passed very rapidly for Frederic. The General and his niece departed, saying that they were going to their country house the next day; and the former declared that he should await with impatience the coming of the Count and his son.

When Constance had gone, Frederic found himself once more alone in the midst of the company, and as soon as he could disappear he hastened to regain his own apartment, to think of—Constance? Oh, no, no: of Sister Anne! It was always the poor little one who occupied his thoughts, but was it his fault if sometimes the memory of Mademoiselle de Valmont mingled with that of the young mute? That arose from the resemblance that existed between them. A loving heart finds that which it adores everywhere, sees the beloved object where it is not, loves it in another who recalls the dear image. That is why it is no safer to trust sentimental people than frivolous ones.

Several days elapsed; Frederic had no news of Dubourg, who probably had not yet returned to Paris. The young count remained sorrowful and pensive, but a certain sweetness began to

minge with his melancholy. The memory of Sister Anne often made him sigh. He wished eagerly to see her again, but he no longer formed the extravagant plans which had seemed so easy of execution on his first return to Paris. He wished to bring happiness to Sister Anne, to make certain of her peace and felicity; but he thought of the future, and he was more than ever certain that his father would never consent to give her to him for a wife. He said to himself sometimes, "What shall we do? What will be the end of this liaison? One cannot always live in a wood; man is made for society, and Sister Anne could not be presented there, for she is ignorant of all that it is indispensable one should know."

Poor little girl! Why did he not think of all this when he saw you for the first time on the border of the brook? But then you seemed to him charming, just as you were; your ignorance rendered you even more interesting in his eyes; and now? Hm! I repeat, men of feeling are no better than the others.

One morning the Count proposed a visit to the General's country house, and Frederic, always at his father's orders, took a little more pains than usual with his toilet. Even if one does not care to please, one does not wish to be an object of repulsion. The Count, who took note of the least important acts of his son, experienced a secret satisfaction, which, however, he did not allow to

appear, and he spoke no more of Mademoiselle de Valmont than of any other person.

The General's country house was in the neighborhood of Montmorency, the travellers arriving there about noon. As he left the carriage, Frederic felt his heart beat more quickly, and he attributed this to the pleasure of seeing again a woman who recalled the features of the one he loved. He was indeed much moved, and when he entered the house he looked everywhere for Mademoiselle de Valmont, but he saw only the General, who gave them a most hospitable welcome.

"You must remain here some days," he said; "I have you, and I shall not let you go sooner. We will talk, we will laugh, we will hunt, we will entertain, — my niece will give us music, — indeed we shall pass the time more gayly than we think."

Frederic's eyes were searching for this niece whom he did not see; and as the General and his father had already begun their campaigns, which would keep them busy a long time, he ventured to ask news of her.

"She is in the garden, no doubt," said the General, "with her aviary, or her flowers, or her belvedere. Go on, go on, young man. Find her. By Jove, it's your affair! At your age a pretty face would have made me run from Paris here."

Frederic profited by the permission, descended into a garden, which seemed very beautiful, and,

walking on at hazard, looked everywhere for Made-moiselle Constance. He passed near the aviary, but she was not there; he plunged into a path shaded by lindens, at the end of which there was a rise in the ground, and a winding path leading to a platform, from which a charming landscape was to be seen. This was no doubt what the General called the belvedere, for Constance was seated there, holding on her knees a drawing tablet, on which she was sketching the view of the lovely valley which one could see from this point. She did not perceive Frederic's arrival, having turned her back to the path leading to the belvedere; and the young man approached and leaned over her shoulder before she roused from her occupation.

"Have you all the talents?" he said to her.

Constance lifted her head; she saw him, and a sentiment of pleasure was depicted in her eyes, while her bosom heaved a little more quickly. She prepared to lay aside her drawing.

"Please go on," said Frederic; "I did not come to interrupt your studies; I want to share them. Besides, your uncle wishes us to remain here several days, — you must not let our presence change any of your habits."

"And will it be a pleasure to you to stay here for some time?" asked Constance, with a little tremble in her voice.

"Of course. I am sure my father could not

have refused his old friend. He is too happy with him."

"But you, monsieur, who have not the same reason for enjoyment in these regions,—I am afraid you will soon be wearied and regret the pleasures of Paris. We receive very few people here; you may be bored."

"You judge me very ill, if you think I could be bored near you."

"Oh, pardon me. I said that for fear—but in fact, if you are fond of outdoor life, drawing, music and reading, you will be very happy in the country."

Frederic made no response; he was looking attentively at Constance, and his heart was oppressed by a thousand different sentiments,—he saw again in her features an ever-loved image. He was transported in thought to the little wood on the borders of the brook; a shadow of sadness darkened his brow; a profound sigh escaped from his bosom. It was only at the end of several minutes that he appeared to rouse from his dream, and then he answered Constance's question.

"Oh, yes; I love the country very much."

The young lady regarded him with astonishment, and smiled; then, seeing that he said nothing more, she went back to her drawing, wishing to continue her landscape; but the presence of Frederic caused her a certain embarrassment;

her hand trembled as she held her pencil, and she hardly knew what she did.

Frederic continued to gaze at her in silence, admiring her grace, her bearing, and her gracious and dignified air. If Sister Anne had received an education, she would have been like her, she would have had her figure, her talents, and she would have expressed herself just as well. He began to discover that, instead of lessening the charms and attractions of a woman, education adds another gift.

The conversation languished between these young people, for Frederic fell often into his reveries, although in spite of that the time passed quickly. They enjoyed being together, and that was sufficient. As to Frederic, he would have passed the entire day looking at Constance and making comparisons, and, while the young lady perceived that he gazed at her without ceasing, yet Frederic's eyes were so sweet, there was something so tender, so touching, in their expression, that no woman could be angry at his look.

The arrival of the two old friends roused the young people from this situation, which they had enjoyed without caring to confess it to themselves. The General was showing the Count all the beauties of the garden, the belvedere being one of them; and there, as he approached, the Count was delighted to observe a certain emotion,

a certain excitement, which contributed not a little to his pleasure, and which the General did not see. He was not so observing as his friend.

"Dear niece," said the General, "here are two guests who have just arrived. Try to do the honors so well that they will not want to leave us for a long time."

"I will do my best," said Constance, blushing.

"Mademoiselle," said the Count, "when we see you here we cannot but wish to remain."

Frederic said nothing, but he looked at Constance, who threw him a furtive glance, while thanking the Count, to see if he shared his father's sentiments.

After dinner two neighbors came in to see the General, one a great billiard player who never slept till he had played his game; the other, who was a little younger and had served in the army, spared no one his campaign stories, which he intermingled with compliments and gallantries for Mademoiselle de Valmont.

Frederic left these gentlemen to play billiards, preferring to remain with Constance, and hear her sing or play the piano.

"Do not trouble yourself to keep me company," she said; "remember, we are not in Paris."

"If it does not displease you," said Frederic, "I prefer to stay with you."

Constance smiled and was plainly not displeased. The most amiable liberty reigned in the country,

and especially at the General's house. During the day each one did as he pleased. Often the Count and his friend went for a promenade in the neighborhood, Frederic remaining with Constance, when they passed a large part of the day in the garden.

"We must enjoy the last beautiful days," said Constance; "winter will come and I shall have to say farewell to my trees, my flowers and my birds. But I shall see them again; the farewell is not eternal."

"Shall you not return to your uncle's estate?"

"Oh, no! I like this house much better. He bought it for me, and he will allow me to pass seven months of the year here. The winter we shall spend in Paris. My uncle is so good, he does everything I wish because he loves me."

"And who could help loving you —"

Frederic did not finish; he stopped as if vexed at what he had said, and Constance, surprised, dropped her eyes and was silent; but she began to grow accustomed to the oddities of the young man. Sometimes, when he remained long near her without saying a word, she was tempted to ask what troubled him; but she did not dare, and she was silent and sighed also, though she did not know why. Melancholy is a dangerous evil, and it grows rapidly between two young people of the opposite sex. Often hours of silence are more dangerous than a conversation of which gallantry is the subject.

Each day a more tender intimacy was established between Frederic and Constance, and before a week had passed they had become friends; they had lost that tone of conventional compliment which is that of the world, but never that of love and of friendship; they had lost their reserve and fear of each other. The Count spoke of returning to Paris, and Frederic was astonished that he had not thought of it, the week had passed so quickly. When he did think about it he was almost angry; he was remorseful because he had been happy, but remorse never comes until after the thing is done. Then he said to himself, "No, I have not forgotten Sister Anne; I see her constantly in Constance. I think of her when I see the sweet features of Mademoiselle de Valmont, I believe myself near her when I am seated near Constance, and I experience a delicious emotion."

It was probably because he was thinking of Sister Anne that Frederic became a little more sentimental; and on the evening of the day before he was to return to Paris with his father, when Frederic was seated in the garden with Constance, he took her hand and held it a long time in his. Constance did not withdraw her hand, but lowered her eyes and appeared deeply moved. Frederic kept silence, pressing her hand tenderly, and, perhaps without thinking, the gentle girl returned this sign of tenderness.

The young man was agitated anew; he dropped the hand he held, and started quickly from Constance. She lifted her head, and, remarking his agitation, smiled with that charm which holds, which enchants. Then she said, —

“You are going tomorrow?”

Frederic approached, and stammered, —

“I must! I should have gone before perhaps, and yet — it is she — I see her always! Oh, if I could be with you constantly! I am so happy, so happy here — ah, pardon me, mademoiselle! I do not know what I am saying.”

Constance did not understand much of this discourse, but lovers often do not know what they are talking about. His speech was incoherent, but she pardoned him gladly, because she interpreted it according to her heart. This told her that Frederic adored her, and enabled her to understand his incoherence, for in love the eyes speak as well as the tongue.

The Count took his son to Paris, and never uttered a word concerning Constance. Ah, Count, you were tactful, and you knew well what you were doing. Only a few days had rolled away, before Frederic said he ought to profit by the last fine weather to make a little visit to the General's country-seat. He burned to see Constance — in order to think of Sister Anne?

CHAPTER V

LUNEL, DUBOURG, AND MADELON

WE left Dubourg preparing to start on his way back to Paris. On this occasion, however, he did not travel in the guise of a Polish nobleman, but went modestly on foot, balancing his cane in his hand as though he were setting out for a simple promenade. The carrying of his luggage caused him no inconvenience, because he had his entire wardrobe on his back, which facilitated his progress when travelling afoot. The houses and grounds which he passed on his way had never before seemed so desirable, so enticing, so magnificent. He passed close to M. Chambertin's mansion and greeted that hospitable dwelling with a sigh, that was not for its mistress, but for the old Pommard in the cellar, and for the entertainment afforded by its generous larder.

Nevertheless he hastened quickly past it, for he was still afraid of meeting that confounded Durosey, whose unforeseen and unwelcome appearance had seemed to be the signal for all the misfortunes which had since fallen upon him. Soon afterwards he entered a little path which led to the highway, and Dubourg found himself almost face to face

with old Lunel, who was returning home leading a donkey loaded with various articles which he had purchased at Grenoble. Dubourg hastened to pull his hat down over his eyes and walked with his head lowered, for he did not care to be recognized by M. Chambertin's jockey; but as he went on he stumbled against the donkey and almost overturned it.

"Can't you see, imbecile?" cried Lunel. "The road's wide enough, and you fall over my donkey."

Dubourg had never liked the old jockey, for during his stay with M. Chambertin the man had never lost an opportunity of being disagreeable to Ménard as well as to him; and he had not forgotten the beating Lunel had given his little Poles. All this was in his mind, and at the word "imbecile" he turned and gave the old jockey three blows across the thighs with his knotted stick. Lunel struck back and shouted, "Help! help! thieves!"

The movement Dubourg had made pushed up his hat, and the old domestic recognized his features. He began to cry loudly, —

"It's that scoundrel palatine, who owes four hundred francs for his meals. It's that false baron that made madame see roman candles, and monsieur, crescents. Peste! he's not so gay as he was."

"Shut up, idiot!" cried Dubourg, lifting his cane again over Lunel.

"But why do you beat me?"

"I'm only returning what you gave to my people; I've owed you that for some time."

"Your people! your people! They were a fine lot. That's the little fee you give me because my master kept you for a month, and your old savant, that ate like six."

"If I have done your master the honor to visit him, what business is that of yours, dunce? What have you to say about it?"

"Yes, you did him a great honor—you did!"

"Take care or I'll begin again!"

Dubourg held up his cane. The old jockey decided to settle down. He was silent, and looked all about for his donkey, to continue his journey. The animal had disappeared while the dispute went on between the gentlemen; it had penetrated into the thicket that bordered the road, and could not be seen.

"O good Lord! where's my donkey? where's my donkey?" cried Lunel, searching every clump of shrubbery with much anxiety.

"My faith! I don't know; look for your donkey, and I'll continue my journey. You will take my compliments to your mistress, and you will tell your master that if he ever comes to see me in Paris, I'll give him a little reception in fireworks."

Lunel did not hear a word that Dubourg said. He ran from right to left of the road, calling,

"Madelon! hi there, Madelon!" He plunged into a covered path; Dubourg lost sight of him, and started again on his own journey, laughing over his adventure.

About half an hour after he had left Lunel, he reached the end of a road leading to a level tract of ground, and as he emerged from the path he saw Madelon, not twenty steps from him. She went on at a gentle trot, with her burden on her back, following freely whichever road she pleased, and stopping occasionally to take a mouthful of thistle or wild blackberries.

"By the Lord! here's a singular adventure!" said Dubourg. "Was this animal sent me by providence? Take care, however; justice might not approve of the gifts of providence. But I haven't carried off this donkey. Is it my fault if it has left its master? However, I'll begin by trying to restore it."

Dubourg returned a few steps into the wood he had just left, and began to call with all his force, —

"Lunel! Hullo! Lunel! Here's your donkey!"

No one responded. Dubourg's shouting was useless. Weary of calling, he returned toward the donkey, saying to himself, —

"It seems as if I had done all I could, and my conscience is a little easier. I can't go back half a league. I've no desire to present myself

again to my friend Chambertin; he's no longer my friend. Let's see what this donkey carries. Probably there's nothing very precious."

Dubourg began the inventory of the two baskets, which were covered with a thick gray cloth. In one he found two syringes, one a patent affair, labelled "For madame," and the other a plain one, labelled "For monsieur." There was a large box containing several phials, and some tiny pasteboard boxes.

"Oh, oh!" cried Dubourg; "have I found an apothecary's shop? But there's a big paper; oh, it's the receipted bill. That will give me all the items.

"Let's see; furnished by Dardanus, apothecary at Grenoble, for Madame Chambertin. Ah, let's see now; here's opiate for the teeth, salve for the gums, three pots of superfine rouge, liquid almond paste, Macassar oil for tinting the hair, bear's grease to prevent its falling, extract of philo come to soften it, essence of Venus to beautify the skin, liquid rouge to color it, and vegetable blue to make veins.

"By Jove!" cried Dubourg; "it's fortunate I didn't find this bill a month ago, for I never should have had the courage to say all those pretty things to Madame Chambertin. Let's go on: laxative pastilles, emollient pills, and quieting pastilles. The devil! All that for madame! Two pounds of health chocolate — ah, well, that's

better! Now let's see about monsieur. Three hundred cathartic pills! O you rascal! that's what gives you such a fresh color! Three bottles of Barége water, corn salve, ointment for the nails, cachous, mint, parsley preserve, astringent pills, tonic tablets. It is evident that monsieur also takes medicine. That's all. Let's see the other basket."

He found first a perruque, freshly curled and frizzed, which madame no doubt wore on the days when she had not time to arrange her hair. Then there was a wooden head, serving to support the wig when it was not in use. He found, last of all, a pair of riding-boots and some deer-skin gloves.

"My faith! I shan't return to Allevard for the sake of pills and syringes," said Dubourg, after he had finished his inventory. "Monsieur and madame will wait several days for the articles they are expecting. I take possession, though I don't know what I shall do with all these drugs. Eh? What an idea! Heavens! there's a way of using this shop, and I could travel without touching my purse, which is not very well filled. Who knows but I might make my fortune? Good! The die is cast! I have been a baron, a palatine, a comedian; I have even been a beast, without intending it. I will now be a quack doctor; it is the easiest trade, and the simplest rôle to play, if one has a little wit, audacity, and an ability for

chattering, all of which I possess. So here I am now, a quack doctor, a charlatan ! Yes, who is not one, in this world ? Each plays the game in his own fashion, — men in place with office-seekers, speculators with capitalists, knaves with fools, wealthy men with women, coquettes with their lovers, debtors with creditors, authors with actors, librarians with readers, and merchants with all the world !

“ As for me, I am a universal healer ; and I can prevent and divine all ills ! Besides, I am a second Cagliostro ; I have a complete pharmacy ; I have no rival ; I work without fraud ; I have discovered a thousand secrets, one of which would make a man’s fortune ; and I sell pills for two sous, because I am a philanthropist.”

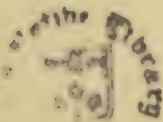
Dubourg was quite decided on this new folly, and he entered a dense coppice with the donkey. There he began by taking off his palatine shoes, which were somewhat worn, and replacing them by the great riding-boots, which came half way up his thighs. He did not wish the salve doctor to be recognized as the Baron Potoski. He buried his head in the blonde wig of Madame Chambertin, after he had taken pains to knot the hair in the back, so that it would look like a Prussian queue. He daubed his cheeks, his forehead and chin, with madame’s superfine rouge. He mounted the crupper of Madelon, held the two baskets before him, which contained his itin-

erant drugstore, and started on his way. He pricked forward his courser with his cane, which served as a switch.

The singular appearance of Dubourg attracted the attention of all the villagers. His face was shaded by beautiful blonde curls; his long queue fell upon his back, his great boots were turned down, because the baskets pinched him terribly. Everyone called to the other to look as he passed. The peasants ran to their doors and windows to see him, and he generally had a string of boys in his rear. Dubourg bowed to right and left, with an air of great benevolence, and shouted in a loud voice, —

“Friends, are you sick? Have you toeache, earache? Have you bad dreams? Do you have trouble in sleeping? Have you nightmare? Have you had a stroke? Are you blind, deaf, paralyzed? Come on; seize the opportunity! I am the great restorer, the great healer, the great operator! Don’t fail to profit by my stay in this country! I shall not return again for thirty years, and it is probable I shall not find all of you then. Come, friends; I heal everything, I do everything, even to curing family troubles. I don’t pull teeth, but I have a water which makes them fall out, and that amounts to the same thing.”

Peasants are naturally credulous. After this discourse, some of them approached Dubourg,



and when they had respectfully removed their hats, or made a reverence, they began to tell their troubles. When the assembly was numerous, Dubourg drew from his basket his mechanical syringe, which he had filled with Barége water. Then he syringed the crowd. The villagers were obliged to hold their noses, but they stayed, for the marvellous syringe played the air, "*Avec les jeux dans le village,*" and Dubourg said,—

"Children, this magic syringe was given to me by the favorite sultana of the Sultan of Egypt. It plays three hundred airs, but it has its caprices, and today it will only play one. This marvellous water which comes from it,—and it doesn't smell of essence of rose!—is a prompt and sovereign remedy for women who have the colic. I give these remedies sometimes myself, but I must choose the person, for this syringe does not go with all faces."

After this lecture, Dubourg heard the complaints of each. He distributed drugs at hazard, but sold them with assurance, promising immediate results from their effects. He gave a nurse some almond paste, to a feverish patient some cachous; for a cold he gave some pills he had made of the corn salve. For asthma he prescribed Macassar oil; for consumption, bear's grease, and for stomach ache he gave some liquid rouge. After this fine prank, he spurred Madelon and endeavored to get as far as possible from his

invalids. Indeed, he was scarcely half a league away before the poor people began to feel the effects of his remedies. Some grasped their stomachs, others were nauseated; these felt a violent headache, those could not endure the taste of the drug they had swallowed. Others ran after the doctor, whom they threatened with a rope's end. But the doctor did not wait for them. It was fortunate that he had prudence enough to distribute his remedies in very small quantities, so that they could not have fatal consequences. Dubourg took pains to heal no one in the neighborhood where he ate or slept. As he travelled he could not go faster than forty leagues in two weeks, for the great healer must pause to do his business, and his charger could only move at a very slow trot. Dubourg found himself one day before a farm of considerable size. For some time he had sold nothing. The nearer he approached the city, the less credulity he encountered. His fortune had not increased, for he ate regularly in the evening what he had gained during the day. When the receipts were good he had a feast, satisfied if he did not encroach on his reserve.

The appearance of the farm tempted Dubourg to stop there. As he had no trumpet or hunting-horn, he made use of his mechanical syringe to announce himself, and he accompanied himself by beating time on the wooden head. The farm

people came out. Among those who appeared, Dubourg noticed a young girl, rosy and fresh, with a bright eye and a tiny foot, of whom he had a great desire to become the physician.

Several stout girls in the lower court bought some salves for fevers and other ills. Different peasants received lozenges of mint or cachou for toothache. But all regarded with astonishment this marvellous syringe that made music, and the wooden head, which the operator declared spoke when it stormed.

The pretty peasant girl was the daughter of the farmer, who was then absent. With her was her aunt, an old lady who believed in dreams, visions, cards, magic, talismans and sorcerers. She consulted Dubourg because for three days she had gone to sleep on her back and had awakened on her stomach, and this seemed very extraordinary.

"I will give you something which will prevent your changing your position," he said to the old lady, while he ogled the young one. "Here are some pastilles which came to me from the coast of Guinea, from a native who slept sometimes eight days in succession on the left ear. After taking it moderately, you pass a delicious night and have charming dreams,—divine dreams, such as one has at fifteen years. It is so delightful that one does not wish to wake up. Finally, dear lady, when you have taken this you are

certain to dream of any person you choose; you only need to walk around your water pitcher three times before retiring."

"Oh, dear monsieur!" said the old lady, "give me those pastilles, quick! I will eat one every night, and tonight I wish to dream of my first husband, who was very amiable and not a drunkard like the second. I will make the tour of the pitcher, monsieur, and I shall not fail!"

Dubourg gave the old lady a box of laxative pills, which she received with gratitude. Then he asked the pretty niece what he could do for her.

"Goodness, monsieur!" said the farmer's daughter, "eight days ago I danced with Thomas, and I fell, and turned my wrist, and it hasn't been the same since. Have you something that will cure it?"

"Have I something, my dear child! Why, I have everything! In a quarter of an hour all your trouble will be gone, and it will never appear again! I have only to rub you with a certain ointment; but it is also necessary for me to say some magic words, and I cannot pronounce them before a witness, for that would destroy the charm. Take me now to your chamber, or to some other place where we can be alone, and I will operate."

"Shall I do it, aunt?" asked the farmer's daughter.

"Why, of course!" cried the good woman. "Profit by the good will of this good man and let him rub you."

The young girl made no more difficulties, but begged Dubourg to follow her. The doctor fastened his donkey and all his shop at the gate of the farm, and followed swiftly the pretty farmer's daughter. She led him to her little room and pushed the door to after her. She trusted herself with confidence to the science of the sorcerer, who seemed to her more comic than frightful.

On her side, the aunt was in a great hurry to enjoy the effect of the medicine, and had not the patience to wait till night to dream of her first husband. So she retired to her room, and, after she had swallowed a pill and performed the necessary ceremony, she went to bed, and awaited with impatience the effect of the charm, which did not announce itself by miracles.

While the ladies were making use of Dubourg's specifics, the farmer returned home. He began by asking about the donkey, which he saw at his gate, and was told that it belonged to the great healer, who had just arrived. He then inquired as to the identity of the great healer, of whom the farm hands said they knew nothing; but he was probably a sorcerer, for he had curled hair like a woman, a long queue, immense boots, a syringe which made you dance, and a wooden head that spoke when it stormed.

The farmer was unfortunately one of those men who do not believe in sorceries, charms or magic. He wished to see with his eyes, hear with his ears. He could not get it into his head that a black fowl will make the devil appear; or that one can read the future in a sheep's liver, in coffee grounds, or in boiling lead thrown into water. These men are the destruction of the occult sciences.

Then, impatient at the peasants' stories, he asked where the great healer had gone, and someone said he had seen the sorcerer go into the house with the aunt and the young lady. The farmer hastened to the widow's chamber, and found her in bed, expecting the delicious dream which had not yet arrived.

"O brother! what have you done?" she said to him. "You have disturbed me; you have upset me entirely! The dream came, I saw my first husband; we went to gather nuts together. Go away! You prevent the effect of the medicine I have taken, and I owe it to this wonderful man who has just come."

"Good Lord!" cried the farmer, "will you never have done with your tales and foolishness? Where has this sorcerer gone? He may steal my rabbits."

"What an idea! He is with your daughter in her room; he is saying an incantation to heal her hand."

"Shut up with my daughter!" cried the farmer; "I'll see about that!" and he ran to the little one's chamber, without waiting to hear the conclusion of the old lady's complaint. The farmer kicked the door open, and doubtless he was not satisfied at the incantation which the healer was making over his daughter, for he seized a broom and began his expostulation with several stout blows. Dubourg had not time to introduce himself; he yelled—and fled! The young girl wept, her father swore, and the whole house was in an uproar.

Our doctor saw the farm hands arming themselves with clubs, to follow the example of their master, and he thought only of his safety. He fled from the farm, abandoning his donkey, his syringes, and all his remedies, which was very fortunate for the sick people who lived upon the route he had still to travel.

CHAPTER VI

LOVE IS ALWAYS THE STRONGEST

DUBOURG arrived in Paris at last, having spent a month and several days in travelling less than twenty leagues; but this was not a very long period if one considers the marvellous cures he had made and the numerous adventures in which he had participated on the way.

When he had fled from the farm where his last miracle had been so poorly recompensed, he had been careful enough to throw away the blond per-ruque with the great queue, for this it was which had continually attracted the train of dirty little boys after him.

He arrived in the capital rather dirty and be-draggled, and somewhat exhausted, but he was there at last, in undaunted spirits, and he at once hastened to his former apartment, which he had given up on leaving Paris, but where he had left a pair of trousers in the care of the portress, a good-natured woman who had a good deal of consideration for the good-for-nothing dare-devil fellows, such as Dubourg, because as a rule they were more generous than rational and well-to-do people.

The concierge gave him, with his trousers, a great sealed package, which he hesitated to open, fearing that it might contain a subpoena or a judgment; he did not allow an attachment to worry him. Breaking the seal, he read a letter, and joy was painted upon his countenance, although he apparently felt that he ought to weep at the same time; but he was too happy to be able to accomplish it, and gave it up as a bad job.

"My dear Madame Benoit," he said to the concierge, "you have often heard me speak of my honored aunt in Brittany, who sometimes sent me money."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, she is dead, Madame Benoit; this fine woman is no more."

"O mon Dieu! what a misfortune!"

"Certainly. But I am her only heir. It is not a great fortune, but it is enough to live on modestly, especially if one is a sage and a philosopher."

"And what did she die of, monsieur?"

"Oh, as to that, I will tell you another time; they are waiting for me in Brittany, and I must go immediately."

"Monsieur, your friend, M. Frederic, has sent to inquire for you several times since you have been gone."

"I will see him on my return. The inheritance must be looked after; that is the most important

matter at present. One must attend to his own affairs before he thinks of those of other people. Adieu, Madame Benoit, adieu! Wait; I make you a present of those trousers, for the news you have given me. You can make a jacket for your little girl out of them. As for me, I shall go as I have come, only I shall not go on foot."

Dubourg ran to the diligence. He still had enough money to pay for his place, and, although he had only a hundred sous left for his meals on the way, he put himself on a diet, promising to make it up later. The old aunt had left all her property to her nephew, whom she believed married and the father of a family. This inheritance would give him almost sixteen hundred livres a year, which was not the income of a baron; but Dubourg could live modestly upon it, especially if he were sensible and economical. These were not his qualities, but like all men he promised to reform and not go beyond his income.

"Monsieur," said the lawyer, who had been intrusted with the matter of the inheritance, "madame, your aunt, made me promise to remind you to be careful of your money, to be faithful to your wife, and to bring up your little twins properly."

"Never fear, monsieur," said Dubourg; "I shall carry out strictly my dear aunt's wishes. My wife and I live like young turtle-doves, and my little twins are like Castor and Pollux."

Dubourg sold the personal effects and property of his aunt, in order to get ready money. All this business kept him nearly two months in Brittany, and it was only at the end of this time that he returned to Paris, dressed in black from head to foot. To indicate his return to sobriety, he began by paying his creditors, and he tried to maintain the reasonable air and quiet, proper manner which he had adopted since he became a man of property.

He thought of Frederic, and did not know whether he ought to write to him or go and see him, when one evening, on entering a café, he saw M. Ménard seated before a domino party and deeply interested in the moves. Dubourg touched him lightly on the arm; M. Ménard turned, recognized his travelling companion, and evidently did not quite know how to receive him.

"Surely, it is dear M. Ménard that I have the pleasure of seeing," said Dubourg, smiling.

"The same, Monsieur de — Monsieur — really, I don't know exactly what to call you," and the tutor smiled, delighted with the joke he had just made.

"What, Monsieur Ménard! You have a grudge against me?"

"Indeed, I ought to have, monsieur, after all the tales you made me believe; and if I ever believe you again —"

"Never mind, Monsieur Ménard; let us leave rancor to malicious people. It can't be said of us, *Nec ipsa mors odium illorum internocinum exstinxit.*"

"Yes; I know well that you are very learned," said the tutor, softening; "but that castle of Krapach, and then to make me go on the stage!"

"Will you accept a demi-tasse and a little glass of liqueur des Iles?"

"Very well, if you wish it."

The tutor said to himself as he followed Dubourg to a table, "This devil of a man has a logic which wins you over, carries you along; it is impossible to remain angry with him."

"Where do you come from?" he asked Dubourg. "My pupil has looked for you everywhere in Paris, and wants to see you."

"I have just come from my property in Brittany."

"Ah, you are from Brittany! I am not surprised that you mixed so much of it with your descriptions of Poland; and then the butter and cheese that you were always talking of."

"Ah, they are excellent, Monsieur Ménard!"

"And what have you been doing in Brittany?"

"I have just inherited a pretty little property from my aunt."

"I'll wager that's not true."

"Ah, Monsieur Ménard, don't you see that I am in mourning?"

"That proves nothing. You had dressed yourself as a Polish nobleman when I gave you my arm in the streets of Lyons. Ah, when I think of that!"

"Do you remember, too, the delicious dinners that I ordered for you?"

"No doubt, no doubt. Oh, you order a dinner perfectly! But that poor M. Chambertin! to make him believe he was receiving an illustrious personage!"

"Listen now, Monsieur Ménard; I think I am just as good as anybody."

"And to give fêtes in your honor, and fireworks, and superb dinners!"

"Where you filled your place also."

"I went there in good faith; I was your accomplice without suspecting it. Do you know that you compromised me? And that is very wrong."

"What do you say to a light glass of punch?"

"Oh, I am afraid —"

"We can have it very sweet."

"Very well, if it is sweet."

"Waiter, some punch!"

"Indeed, my friend, I am not of your age, and the follies that are pardoned to youth are not excusable at a more mature time of life."

"You speak like Cicero, but I reply that Cato learned to dance at sixty."

"Are you very sure of that?"

"I am sure that our follies have been very moderate. Let us drink!"

"I know that, after all, they have done no harm to anyone. It is good, — the punch; it is very good. But when you made me run across all those fields, on account of your make-believe Turks —"

"Oh, my faith! it was a creditor; and those fellows, — aren't they Turks to their poor debtors? Let us drink!"

"It is true that creditors — but look here, dear Dubourg; you have all the qualities of a charming fellow. You know the good authors, you know history; believe me, you should settle down, turn over a new leaf —"

"I have! it is finished! No more play; no more nonsense, no more excess at eating! But we are not drinking!"

"To your health, my dear friend!"

"No more idle yarns, no more lies!"

"Yes, yes; no more lies especially, because lies destroy confidence. And as for me, they made me appear an imbecile."

"Oh, not at all!"

"You have a very pretty stone in that setting."

"It is an emerald that belonged to Ali Pasha."

"It is magnificent."

"One more glass!"

"This brave Dubourg! My friend, I am very

happy to have renewed my acquaintance with you."

The liqueur and the punch had greatly softened M. Ménard, who left Dubourg at last, calling him his dear friend, and assuring him that he might venture to go to the hotel, that M. le Comte de Montreville wished it, and would be glad to see him.

The day after this meeting Dubourg called upon Frederic, who had just returned from the General's house. The young man passed all his time with Mademoiselle de Valmont, and no longer needed that his father should accompany him when he visited the General, the old gentleman treating him like a son. Frederic profited by this liberty; every day he found for himself a pretext for going to see Constance, for he wished to delude himself, nor would he acknowledge the true state of the case, preferring to tell himself that love had nothing to do with the sentiment that drew him to the General's niece.

He still thought of Sister Anne, but it was not with the same ardor, the same tenderness, as formerly, although he would not confess it to himself. Perhaps if he could see her again he would still feel an inexpressible sweetness when he pressed her in his arms. She did not reign in his thoughts any longer; Constance reigned there in her stead, — Constance, who became for him each day more tender, more lovable, more sympathetic;

who felt such pleasure in seeing him, and who did not try to conceal it. A tender intimacy was already established between them. When Made-moiselle de Valmont did not see Frederic for several days, she reproached him gently, she confessed that she was wearied in his absence, and she said this with an expression so candid and sincere that Frederic was deeply touched. He had never yet said a word of love to her ; but is it always necessary to speak to make one's self understood, and what woman in Constance's place would not have believed herself loved ?

When he saw Dubourg, Frederic started a little with surprise, and an observer would have said even with embarrassment.

"Here I am," said Dubourg ; "I am not more than a week in Paris."

"Yes, — I thought you were still away. But why this mourning ?"

"Ah, my friend ! my poor aunt ! She is no more !"

Here Dubourg drew out his handkerchief, and blew his nose five or six times in succession.

"Come now, Dubourg, put up your handkerchief ; you know you won't shed any tears."

"After all, she was a very fine woman. She left me an income of sixteen hundred livres."

"That's something ; but don't lose it all at play."

"Oh, what are you talking about ? Écarté is

like medicine to me! But you,—tell me the news of your love affairs. Do you know you don't look much downcast for an unhappy lover."

"But I—You know I went to Grenoble to get news of you, and my father, who had just arrived in search of me, took me away, and since then I have not seen that poor little girl. We left so hurriedly, and since that time what could I do? Write? Who would read my letters? We could not use this means, and I do not know how to get news."

"Well, then, I'll give you some."

"You've seen her?"

"Yes, but it was a long time ago. It was about a fortnight after you left."

"Where was she? What was she doing?"

"Where was she? In the wood, of course, returning from the road, from which, no doubt, she hoped to see you coming. What was she doing? She was weeping; I think that is her only resource now."

"She wept!"

"Yes, and I confess she gave me the blues."

"Poor child! But you spoke to her, she saw you? Tell me everything."

"She saw me, she even recognized me, though she had seen me only once. You had not told me she was a mute, but I understood it easily from her signs. She counted the days of your absence, and asked if you would return; and I told her yes."

"Ah, you did well."

"But that was three months ago!"

"That is true; I have not been able —"

"Well, I left her, after I had given her hope; I couldn't give her anything else, and I should think in three months that would have vanished."

Dubourg said nothing more, and Frederic continued for some time sorrowful and pensive. After a while he addressed his friend:—

"Do you know, Dubourg, a surprising thing has happened to me?"

"If you tell me I shall know."

"It is truly inconceivable! It is like fate! When I returned to Paris I found Sister Anne again!"

"You found her here?"

"Yes, I saw her in another woman,—in the niece of General Valmont, an old comrade of my father. Ah, dear friend, it is an astonishing thing! Never have I seen a more perfect resemblance."

"Ah, I begin to understand."

"If you could see Constance (that is the name of the General's niece), you would be as surprised as I have been,—not, perhaps, all at once, but when you knew her well."

"Oh, it has been a surprise in crescendo?"

"Their eyes have the same sweetness, the same expression; those of Constance may be a little darker. Her hair is the same color, and her brow is just as noble and gracious; they have the same

complexion, although Constance is less pale than Sister Anne, and there is the same expression of feature."

"I am astonished that the niece of a general should have the same features as a goatherd."

"Of course there is the difference which comes from position, education and the customs of society; besides which, Constance is much taller, of a charming figure. She is very well made, but so is Sister Anne. Constance has the grace, the bearing, that one cannot get living in the depth of a wood."

"Ah, you have found that out!"

"Finally, she has a charming voice, a perfectly enchanting voice, which penetrates to the bottom of the heart! Well, dear friend, when I hear it, I believe that the poor orphan is not mute; I imagine that I am listening to her; I am sure her voice would have the same sweetness, the same fascination, and so I am deeply moved whenever I hear this voice."

"I don't know whether such an emotion would give great pleasure to Sister Anne."

"Oh, it is impossible not to feel it. Tell me, isn't this resemblance very singular?"

"Very singular, no doubt; nevertheless, it might not be so striking to my eyes. I am no longer astonished at your leaving the little one in the wood. You find her again here, you see her, you hear her, the latter a delight which you did

not have in the wood. You can study her at your ease every day; she has here graces and talents that she did not have there; it is very convenient. Accept my compliments. I see you do not need to trouble yourself about Sister Anne, who is far away. Let her stay in her cottage or on the mountain. What if she does look for your coming, since you find her again near at home without troubling yourself, and she is more beautiful, more fascinating."

There was an irony in Dubourg's tone, an accent of reproach that made Frederic drop his eyes.

"No, no," he said, with embarrassment; "I will not abandon Sister Anne; of course I will go to see her; I will find her. I have not forgotten her, for I think of her all the time. Is it my fault if I discover all her traits in another woman? Is it not, on the contrary, a proof that she is constantly in my mind? But indeed, it is surprising Mademoiselle de Valmont resembles her so closely, in spite of some slight differences. She is so sweet, so good! Her voice always brings tears to my eyes. Ah, I wish you could see Constance."

Dubourg made no reply, and for some moments the friends kept silence. At length Dubourg broke it.

"Really, Frederic, I wish I hadn't seen that little girl again, crying and looking for you."

"Why so?"

“ Ah, why? Because, in spite of my carelessness, I can’t forget her. I feel — well, it gives me the blues. I’m only a blundering fellow, a stroller, a good-for-nothing, even; but I tell you, I like my way of loving better than yours. With all your fine sentiments, which should never come to an end, but which do end like everything else, you win young hearts and loving women, who, touched by your sighs and your tender speeches, give everything to you and then are left to weep, broken-hearted, over your inconstancy.

“ My faith! I only know light women, grissettes, coquettes, who are not worth much; there is more fun in my way. They deceive me, I deceive them, we deceive each other; it’s expected, it’s accepted: but there are no hearts broken. We cry, and we laugh, and if we quarrel occasionally no one is hurt, no one is unhappy. I confess that these ladies are not of the first virtue, but is it necessary to seek young hearts, which only know love through romantic novels, where love is painted in a very fascinating but a very untrue fashion — should you seek such hearts for the excitement of an intrigue, a caprice? No; on the contrary, I believe it is a barbarous act to endeavor to inspire real love, a grand passion, with no sincere intention. The result is that you leave a broken-hearted victim, to spend her most beautiful days in weeping and despair.”

“ But why do you say all this to me? I love

Sister Anne ; I'm not unfaithful to her. Is it my fault that my father took me away to Paris so suddenly, and that since then I have not been able to go back ? Of course I shall see her again ; I shall not abandon her. She will always be dear to me."

"Come now, Frederic, do you want me to believe that I have le nez aquilin ? I am an old stager ; you cannot deceive me ; and besides, perhaps I have read your heart better than you have yourself. You do not love Sister Anne any more, or at least you have no passion for her, because you are completely smitten with this charming Constance, who is in every way the image of the poor mute, except that she is a little taller, a little stronger, that her eyes are a little darker, and her complexion different."

"No, Dubourg, no ; I swear to you that I am not smitten with Constance. I love her like a brother, but not a word of love has ever passed my lips to her."

"Well, I'll wager it will not be long before it does. Oh, you can raise your eyes to Heaven all you want to. I tell you that you are in love with Mademoiselle Constance. That's not a crime, it is very natural, — this young person is pretty, she pleases you, — nothing better. What I blame you for is that you went to the depths of a wood and hunted up this poor little thing, who had no knowledge of the world or men, and who let you

fascinate her and believed all your oaths, because no one had ever sworn oaths to her before. It was a crime for you to inspire in her an exalted sentiment, which must cause her misery, because in the wood she has nothing to distract her from it. If, under temptation, you had deceived her and left her immediately, the sorrow would have been great, but not so severe; she would not have had time to love you so much. But you always overdo things!

“You abandoned everything to remain in the wood, so as not to be separated from her. For six weeks you did not leave her an instant; you ate nuts, you slept upon the grass, you existed on roots if necessary, in order to talk of love. How the devil could you think that it would not turn her head? She could not let you out of her sight; she lived, she breathed, only in your presence; she supposed this kind of life would last always, when suddenly—bang! monsieur is gone! Well, good evening; it is finished! Weep! Break your heart! You will never see him again!

“But I have seen her, for which I am very sorry, because I can’t get her out of my mind,—pale, dishevelled, walking without seeing, listening without hearing, she was absorbed in a single idea. Her eyes overflowed with tears, as she turned them each moment to the road by which Fred-eric had gone, and entered her cottage still weep-

ing; the next day the same, and always the same; deprived of even the last consolation of the unhappy,—to pour her complaints and sorrows into the ear of a friend! You are the cause of all that; it is not the most pleasing chapter of your history. You could have avoided just such trouble if you had not given way to your romantic notions, or if you had fallen in love with a woman of the world.”

Frederic made no reply; he appeared to be thinking deeply.

“Dear friend,” said Dubourg, taking his hand, “I have said what I think; I hope you are not angry about it. Besides, all that one says to a man in love does not prevent him from doing what he pleases. I know you can’t marry Sister Anne. Good Lord! if we had to marry all the women we have loved, I should have as many wives as Solomon. I only wanted to say that I couldn’t help being sorry. But don’t let’s talk about it. I am your friend just the same, and I am completely at your service. Adieu; I’m going to dine for thirty-two sous, for when you have only sixteen hundred livres a year, and want to keep it, you don’t go to Beauvilliers’.”

Dubourg had been gone a long time, and Frederic remained buried in his reflections. In spite of himself, a light had been poured upon the state of his heart, and, while he still wished to cherish his illusions, he was obliged to confess

that he was no longer the tender, passionate, faithful lover who would sacrifice everything to pass his days with the young mute.

It is difficult to confess our sins to ourselves, and even when we do acknowledge them, we find some reason to excuse our conduct, and we say to ourselves, "I could not have done otherwise." We reason thus especially in affairs of the heart; and as the latest sentiment is the strongest, it must conquer the previous ones.

Frederic, considering every means of repairing his fault, said to himself, "I will see Sister Anne again, and I will not leave her to pass her life in a miserable hut, deprived of all society; I will buy her a pretty little cottage with a lovely garden, cows and flocks. I will put into this house everything that will occupy her time pleasantly and brighten her life; I will give her a village maiden of her own age to serve her and amuse her; she will live in this retreat with old Marguerite, and there at least she will lack for nothing. Her melancholy will be dissipated by her cheerful surroundings and the cares which will occupy her; I will go to see her sometimes, and she will be happy."

Happy, without Frederic! No, Sister Anne could never be that. Comfort, even wealth, could not compensate her for the loss of her lover. Sister Anne was not reared in Paris, and she could not understand that some women might prefer

diamonds and cashmeres to the joys of love, or to be paid for their falseness with gold. Frederic having forgotten his love in five months, it is not strange that he thought Sister Anne would feel as he did ; we judge the hearts of others by our own.

For several days Frederic was tormented by what Dubourg had said to him, and the image of the young mute was constantly before his eyes. His melancholy had almost disappeared, but now it weighed upon him more than ever, even when he was near Constance. The General had returned to Paris with his niece, and, although Frederic could see Constance every day, he scarcely dared visit her. Mademoiselle de Valmont, astonished at his sadness, dared not ask its cause ; but her eyes spoke for her, revealing the share she felt in his hidden sorrow, and often the anxiety she experienced to divine its reason.

Wishing to be free of his anxiety and to have news of Sister Anne, Frederic begged Dubourg several times to go to Vizille, to see the young orphan and try to console her. But on this point Dubourg was not to be persuaded.

" I will not go," he said ; " I've seen her once, and that's enough. I don't care to see her again, and have the blues for six weeks, — I, who never knew what they were before. My presence would not console her anyway ; she would not believe what I said because I lied to her before. My

journey would do no good and would not change the situation in the least."

As he was not able to gain Dubourg's consent to be his emissary, Frederic decided to ask his father's permission to go away for a couple of weeks. He only decided upon this course after long hesitation, but remorse would not let him rest. He was constantly tormented by the memory of the poor little girl, and he was sure he should be more calm, more tranquil, after he had seen her.

For some time the Count had treated his son with the most tender friendship. He believed he had entirely forgotten the fancy that had led him astray during his stay in Dauphiny, and, being certain of his love for Mademoiselle de Valmont, the Count dropped his tone of severity toward Frederic. He hoped soon to see accomplished the plan he had formed, in which he felt sure of the General's sympathy, and he was therefore greatly surprised at his son's request for permission to be absent a fortnight.

The Count of Montreville's brow became once more dark and severe, and Frederic, as usual trembling before his father, waited anxiously to hear what he would say.

"Where do you want to go?" asked the Count, after a moment's silence.

Frederic stammered some pretext, but the Count did not give him time to speak.

"Don't beat around the bush; I hate it! You're still thinking of that woman who ensnared you on your journey, and for whom I know you committed a thousand follies. I must confess that I had supposed you had become reasonable. I believed that the memory of this intrigue had vanished from your fancy long ago — I don't say from your heart, for the heart has nothing to do with such affairs."

"O father, if you knew her!"

"No more, monsieur. You can, unquestionably, have no intention of marrying your conquest. But it is possible you have wrongs to repair. I do not know this girl; perhaps you have been more guilty than I thought. It may be that she was your victim; perhaps she is now friendless and an outcast through your fault. If money can restore her happiness, believe me, monsieur, I will not spare it. But I am the one to look after this matter, not you."

"You, father?"

"Yes, monsieur, I myself. I shall know better than any other how to arrange it. You will not leave Paris at present. Besides," the Count went on after a moment's reflection, "moreover, your presence is indispensable here. The General intends to marry his niece to a young colonel, whom he expects, and who will arrive before long."

"The General — to marry his niece?" said Frederic.

A revolution had taken place in Frederic. His sadness and melancholy had disappeared before a violent disturbance, a jealous anger, which was evident in his excited glance. He could no longer sit still, and when he questioned his father he seemed to be awaiting a sentence of life or death.

"Yes," said the Count, pretending not to notice Frederic's condition — "yes, the General intends to marry his niece. I don't think there's anything surprising in that."

"And — and — this colonel is coming? Do you know him, father? Is he young? Is he attractive? No doubt Mademoiselle de Valmont loves him?"

"Please remember that I am not in Mademoiselle de Valmont's confidence. She must have met the colonel in society. Yes, I believe he is a young man of twenty-eight or thirty years."

"Is he handsome?"

"Oh, handsome or homely, he is a man of honor; isn't that enough?"

"And this marriage is arranged?"

"It appears that it is."

"Mademoiselle Constance has never spoken of it to me!"

"But why should she have talked in advance of a thing which a well-bred young woman never mentions?"

"Oh, of course I have no right — I ought not to expect — but still I should have thought —"

"Besides, it is possible that the General has not yet told his niece of his plans."

"And is it on this account that I am to remain in Paris?"

"Certainly. In such circumstances there are a thousand details of fêtes, of toilet, of shopping; the General, a man accustomed to the life of the camps, understands nothing of such things. Like a boy, he has need of advice, and he depends on you for it."

"Well, it is very amiable of him — I am glad that he has found me good enough."

"So now, Frederic, I repeat, do not think of going away."

This warning was now useless. The Count went to see his old friend, with whom he wished to have a private talk; and Frederic, after his father's departure, sat as if stunned by what he had heard. Poor Sister Anne! your memory has vanished! Frederic, pale, agitated, breathing with difficulty, strode up and down his apartment, and then, having sat down for a few minutes, would rise abruptly, sighing and clinching his hands with convulsive force. It was in this state that Dubourg found him when he came to say farewell, Frederic having told him of his plan; and Dubourg, shocked at his friend's condition, paused to consider him.

"What is the matter, Frederic? What the devil has happened to you? I say, can't you speak,

instead of stamping around and knocking over the furniture?"

"Who would have believed it? Who would have thought it? Oh, women, women!"

"Ah! if it is a question of women, I shan't worry."

"To conceal such perfidy under those sweet eyes and that frank face! For it is perfidy! She ought to have told me she loved another! To welcome me so cordially, to seem so glad to see me! Oh, it is frightful!"

"There's no doubt it's frightful; but what are you talking about?"

"Of Mademoiselle de Valmont, of Constance — so beautiful, so charming!"

"Oh, yes; the one who is so much like Sister Anne?"

"Yes, dear friend; and what do you think? She is going to be married — to marry a man I never saw; but she loves him, — that goes without saying! A man that I don't know, but he's coming in a few days to marry her!"

"Mademoiselle de Valmont is, then, about to marry?"

"Yes, Dubourg."

"Well, what's that to you? You don't love her — you are not at all smitten with her — not a word of gallantry has ever crossed your lips to her — you are a brother to her, a friend. You told me so not a month ago."

"No, of course I don't love her! But there are certain marks of confidence that you owe a friend, especially when you see that friend every day."

"Ah, you see her every day!"

"She could have made me understand, she could have let me see! O Constance! I would not have believed it!"

"Ah! then you're not going to Dauphiny just now! Tell me — Frederic! Frederic!"

But he was already far away, running like a crazy person to the home of Mademoiselle de Valmont. Dubourg left the hotel, saying, "He's a fine fellow to accuse women of perfidy! Oh, these men! these men! I must get my dinner. I don't know how it is, but I'm already in debt to my restaurant, and it's not the middle of the month."

Frederic reached the General's house without having formed any plan, without knowing what he intended to say or what he intended to do. He entered the house, where the servants were accustomed to seeing him, and, rapidly crossing several apartments, reached the salon where he usually found Constance. She was there indeed, seated at her piano. When he saw her busy and calm, as was her wont, Frederic remained a moment motionless to gaze at her.

Constance had turned her head when she heard someone enter, and smiled when she recognized

Frederic, whose excitement she had not as yet noticed.

"It's you, monsieur," said she. "So much the better; you are a good musician and can help me pick out this piece."

The young man did not reply; he continued to gaze at Constance, who was so accustomed to his strange and often silent ways that she did not at first notice that he was disturbed. She turned again, however, when she saw that he had not approached her, and this time his emotion did not escape her.

"What is the matter with you, monsieur?" she asked with interest. "You seem much disturbed."

"Oh, nothing is the matter with me, mademoiselle; what could be?"

"But I don't know — you have never told me your troubles."

At this point a slight tone of reproach crept into the voice of Constance. Frederic, seating himself beside her, seemed to wish to read her eyes; while Constance, surprised, blushed, and lowered them; never had he looked at her so before.

"You fear that I divine what is going on in your heart," said Frederic at last, feigning a tone of irony to conceal his grief.

"I, monsieur! Really, I don't know what you mean; I don't understand you. Why should I fear to have my thoughts read? I am not guilty; if I am, it is not for you to reproach me."

"Oh, of course — you are entirely mistress of your feelings, mademoiselle ; I know that I have no claim on your heart."

"Mon Dieu ! What is the matter with you, Monsieur Frederic ? Really, you alarm me ; your trouble is unnatural."

"What is the matter with me ? Ah, Constance, you love another, and you ask me that !"

Mademoiselle de Valmont remained silent, bewildered ; never had Frederic addressed her in this way ; and the words, "you love another," — did they not mean, "you should love only me" ? Constance felt a delicious emotion in her heart, which beat more quickly ; her eyes beamed with an expression of pleasure and happiness, and her voice was even more tender than usual as she spoke to Frederic.

"I love another ! Mon Dieu ! what do you mean ? Explain yourself, Frederic. I don't understand."

The lovely girl had understood only one thing, and that was that the young man did not wish her to love anyone else, which was enough to make her believe that she was beloved. For a long time she had hoped that she had inspired in Frederic the most tender sentiments ; but still he had never said a word on the subject, never anything which meant, I love you ; and even when everything leads one to believe it, one likes to hear it said.

Frederic was silent again, while deep sighs escaped his breast. Still he said nothing.

"Will you speak, monsieur?" said Constance. "What troubles you today? What have I done to deserve your reproaches? Explain it to me. I wish it; understand, monsieur, I wish it."

The voice of Constance was so tender as she uttered these words that Frederic could not help looking at her again, and certainly Mademoiselle de Valmont's eyes harmonized with her voice, for he remained some moments gazing into them with delight; but suddenly he exclaimed, —

"How unhappy I am!"

"You unhappy, Frederic? And why?"

"You are going to be married —"

"I am going to be married! That is the first news I have heard of it."

"Oh, it would be vain to try to conceal it from me; I know all, mademoiselle. I know that your intended will arrive in a few days, that he is a colonel, and that you love him."

"What! — a colonel — and I love him! Oh, good gracious! this is too much. And what is the name of this colonel whom I am going to marry?"

"His name — oh, my faith! I forgot to ask it. But most assuredly you know what I am talking about. You won't insist that you don't know a colonel."

"There are several who come to see my uncle, but —"

"Ah, there are several ; you confess it then !"

"And who told you, monsieur, that I am going to marry ?"

"Someone who knows what he is talking about, — my father, who heard it from your uncle."

"From my uncle ? But I don't understand this at all."

"You pretend not to understand me ! But I know you are waiting with impatience the arrival of your future husband !"

Constance reflected for some time, and then replied with an air which she endeavored to render very cold, —

"Really, monsieur, I am somewhat astonished at what you have said to me ; but if it were true that I did intend to marry, I don't see how it concerns you in the least. And I am sure it is a matter to which you would be supremely indifferent."

"Ah, do you think so ? Well, you are right, mademoiselle ; it can be nothing to me."

"Very well, monsieur ; then why do you ask me all these questions ?"

"Why ? Ah, Constance ! You are going to marry ; — and this colonel, — do you love him ?"

"And — if I loved anyone, would it cause you pain ?"

Constance wanted to push him to the point, to make him declare his sentiments. Frederic could no longer control himself ; his heart would not

keep its secret another moment. "Ah," he cried, "I love you, I adore you! I shall die if you marry another!"

"He loves me; I am happy to have torn this confession from him! I believed he would never say it!"

The lovely girl extended her hand to Frederic, who fell at her knees and covered it with kisses; while Constance said to him tenderly, —

"Ah, Frederic, I, too, love you. I have never loved anyone but you. Dear friend, why did you not say this to me sooner? It makes me very happy, and I have waited for it so long! My uncle is good to me; he would not make me unhappy. I have not heard of any plan for a marriage. But if he has formed such a plan, he will have to give it up. I shall tell him that I will marry no one but you. You alone can have my hand and my heart, and he will consent to it, I am certain. He loves you too, Frederic, — who can help loving you? You will see that you are wrong to be sorrowful and melancholy, to conceal your troubles from me. Dear friend, I read your heart a long time ago, — don't you think you ought to read mine?"

Frederic answered only by oaths of love; he lost his head entirely; Constance's confession made him almost hysterical with delight, and Mademoiselle de Valmont had much difficulty in calming him. He would not leave her until she had





assured him once more that she would never marry another.

Frederic left the house in a state of mind very different from that in which he had entered it. The certainty of being loved by Constance had changed all his resolutions in a moment, and in his delirium Sister Anne was entirely forgotten; he even forgot his remorse. Like those sick people who in the height of fever suffer no more pain, Frederic cried, —

“Dubourg was right! I love Constance! I adore her! I will never love anyone but her!”

Two days after this declaration the Count of Montreville left for Dauphiny, accompanied by a postilion and a single servant, perfectly sure that Frederic would not want to leave Constance.

CHAPTER VII

DEATH OF MARGUERITE. SISTER ANNE LEAVES HER COTTAGE

LET us return to the wood and to the young mute, whom we left awaiting Frederic's return, and whom we shall again find still waiting for him.

But the trees were now barren of foliage, the fields no longer offered to the eye the soft greens of luxuriant vegetation; the grass had disappeared from the valley, there was no longer verdure on the banks of the gently rippling brooks. The leaves had fallen and the feet of the villager now passed over that which a short time before had given grateful shade to his head and embellished his garden. He trampled under his foot the beautiful foliage of the springtime, which the approach of another season had relentlessly sent to its death.

Thus all things pass and are succeeded by yet others which, in their turn, must also pass. Another foliage will be born, to fall in due time, and the man who tramples it with his feet must also return to dust over which other generations witting nothing of those gone before, will tread.

He thinks he is of more importance, because his course has been a little longer ; but when the centuries have dispersed his ashes, what will there be left of him more than of the leaves which the wind chases before him ?

The autumn inclines us to melancholy ; its soft haze leads to dreaming and reflection. The man of the city does not feel this, because he is swept along in the current of worldly interests, by absorption in his business or his pleasures. But the man of the fields can contemplate each day the changes that are at work in the whole of nature, and his heart stirs at sight of the forest, whose black and impoverished trees seem to wear mourning for the lost springtime. If he traverses a route shaded by the thick branches, if he seeks the groves under which he found repose during the heat of the day, he sees nothing but dry branches, which have been broken by the hand of the poor, seeking scanty fuel.

The dome of the forest is lighted. It is less sombre than in summer, and the sunbeams penetrate everywhere. But this brightness, far from being an advantage, deprives it of all charm. One regrets the dark and mysterious pathways, in the midst of which it is so sweet to walk in the season of love.

As he sees the approach of frost, and observes the signs of winter, man, rocked in the cradle of hope, says to himself : Springtime will return ; I

shall see again my shadows, my grass and my groves. The springtime returns; but often the man no longer watches the changing seasons.

Sister Anne only noticed the chill of autumn, because it made her realize the length of time that had elapsed since Frederic left her. The poor little thing could no longer count the days, their number was too great, but hope had not yet fled from her heart. She could not believe that her lover meant to abandon her. Sometimes she imagined that Frederic was dead, and then the blackest despair took possession of her soul. When this thought presented itself to her mind, life seemed nothing but a long suffering. Could she continue to live if the hope of seeing her lover again no longer sustained her? She often wished to die; but she was to become a mother, and the joy of this hope attached her to existence. Something told her to live for the sake of her child.

It was long since the young orphan had been to the village. An old shepherd who passed through the wood was accustomed to leave each day, at the foot of a tree, the black bread which the cottagers needed, and in exchange he found always a great pot of milk; this bread, with cheese and eggs, comprising the entire nourishment of the poor women in winter. When Sister Anne had finished the preparations for their repast, and given her aged companion all she needed, she went with her goats to the mountain road and

seated herself at the foot of her mother's tree. In spite of the cold, which began to be quite severe, the young girl did not miss a day at her self-appointed tryst. Covered with an old half-worn woollen mantle, she braved the rigor of the season, wrapping herself in this garment, although it was a very slight protection. Her goats found nothing on which to browse on the mountain; they crouched shivering at the feet of Sister Anne, whose features were emaciated by her condition and her sufferings, and offered but too faithful a picture of poverty and sorrow.

More than once the snow fell in great flakes, and formed a mantle of ice over the body of the girl, so that she was scarcely to be distinguished from the ground on which she sat, who shared her covering with her poor companions. The traveller who passed over the mountain and noticed this snow-covered mound observed the head of the young girl as its only sign of life. She looked always toward the road leading from the village. She was insensible to the cold; she did not know that her body shivered from the chill, her teeth chattered and her limbs stiffened. She did not feel physical suffering. A great anguish absorbed her. It filled her being so completely that there was no room for any other sensation.

When it grew so dark that she could no longer see the road, she rose and looked around, astonished to see herself covered with snow; she shook

her mantle, caressed her goats, and went slowly down the mountain. She returned to make old Marguerite comfortable, then she threw herself on her solitary couch. She no longer found love there; she found not even repose, which it was impossible to attain while her heart was filled with an unsatisfied yearning for her lover. She saw him everywhere; his memory spoke to her from every object. If only she could have voiced her complaints, could have called, could have implored him;—it seemed to her that her accents would have reached him anywhere! Poor child, whom Heaven had deprived of the privilege of expression! Tears, always tears! They alone were left you.

Sister Anne saw old Marguerite grow feebler day by day. For a long time the old woman had not gone out of the house; she had scarcely been able to move to her great chair. Marguerite was seventy-six years old; her life had been active and laborious; her old age was tranquil; free from infirmities, the good woman did not suffer. Age alone weakened her forces, which diminished with every hour; she was going out like a lamp, after she had given a clear light. She had not been brilliant, but she had been useful, and that is preferable.

The instant determined by nature approached; Marguerite could not see another spring. Sister Anne redoubled her cares for her adoptive mother;

perceiving how much her faculties were enfeebled, she gave up her visits to the mountain, in order not to leave her. This sacrifice was the greatest she could have made. The good old Marguerite, touched by her attachment, smiled on her adopted daughter and called her "dear child." One morning Sister Anne approached her mother's bed as usual to see how she had passed the night, but Marguerite made no response to her question; she did not stretch out her trembling hand for greeting; her eyes were closed; she would never open them again. Sister Anne, frightened, took the old woman's hand, — it was cold and inanimate. In vain she tried to warm it in her own. She dropped a kiss on Marguerite's brow, but no smile was her recompense.

The young girl remained overwhelmed beside the bed of her companion; she gazed at the venerable features of the good soul who had cared for her infancy, her only friend; and she too had been taken away! Marguerite seemed to sleep. The serenity of her features testified to that of her spirit in its last earthly moments. Sister Anne leaned over the bed, supported on one hand, and could not keep her eyes from the face of her adoptive mother. Her sorrow was calm, but it was not less deep. The tears had dried in her eyes, but their expression was heart-breaking.

Sister Anne had passed a part of the day beside the inanimate remains of the good woman, and

she could scarcely persuade herself to withdraw; but she knew that she must perform the last duties for Marguerite, and conduct her to her final asylum, and the young girl was incapable of doing this alone and without help. She must go to the village, where she had not been for a long time.

She left the cottage, emerged from the wood, and turned toward Vizille. On her way she saluted the villagers whom she knew, as usual; but she could not understand why the peasants turned their heads away, or looked at her with scorn. Instead of stopping, as was their custom, to pass the time of day with Sister Anne, they hastened past her and seemed anxious to avoid meeting her; the young people looked at her and smiled mockingly; some gossiped together, pointing their fingers at her, and on their faces she saw none of those marks of interest that they were accustomed to show her.

"What is the matter with them?" said the poor orphan. "Is it because I am more unhappy, because I have lost my mother, and Frederic has abandoned me?"

She did not realize that the proof of her weakness was evident in her appearance; and this pledge of love, of which she was so proud, was only a mark of shame to the peasants. In the village, people are more severe than in the city; they make a great point of innocence, because it is the only treasure they possess. The residents

of Vizille held very severe opinions on the subject of morals. A young girl who had fallen became an object of general scorn ; and she, as well as her betrayer, was forbidden to take communion. Perhaps they should have shown themselves more indulgent to the young mute ; for she lived in the depth of the wood, and did not know that she was sinning when she yielded to the prompting of her heart. But peasants do not reason : they act from habit, and often mechanically. They had shown great interest in Sister Anne while she was innocent as well as unhappy ; now that she bore the evidence of her weakness they repulsed her, without stopping to ask whether she was not now more unfortunate than before.

The young girl arrived in the village, and, understanding nothing at all of the conduct of the inhabitants, she could not imagine why the young girls fled at her approach, without deigning to respond to her signs, or why their parents looked at her with such a severe and scornful air.

She knocked at the door of a cottage of which the owners were friends of Marguerite ; but the woman who opened the door started with surprise when she saw the young girl, and wished to send her away from the house. Sister Anne tried to make her understand the loss she had sustained ; but the angry woman pushed her into the street, where a group of villagers had gathered to stare at her.

"How dare you come to the village in this state?" said an old peasant to her. "How dare you show yourself among us, and try to enter our houses? You carry the marks of your shame! You had better hide yourself in the depth of your wood. And you dare to present yourself to our daughters! Do you want them to admire your fine conduct? Do you think you are setting them a beautiful example? Go, daughter of Clotilda! You ought to die of shame! Return to your cottage! Fly with your betrayer if you wish, but don't show yourself again among our wives and children."

Sister Anne could not understand how it could be sinful to learn what love is. She looked at the villagers in surprise; she stretched to them her supplicating hands, trying to make them comprehend that she had not come to ask aid for herself, but the villagers would not see; they repulsed her and shut their doors in her face. Some of them went to the end of the village with her, and only left her after they had warned her never to enter its limits again.

The poor child was suffocated, her sobs stifled her. To be treated thus because she had loved Frederic! This thought sustained her courage: she suffered these humiliations for him. She would endure everything rather than give up his love. She regained her cottage, all in tears. It was night; profound solitude reigned in this

dwelling, which must be now more than ever the abode of silence. The poor child was entirely alone upon earth. Sister Anne was untouched by the vain terrors and almost puerile fears which even great souls sometimes feel in the presence of death. She returned to the bed on which Marguerite reposed, and, throwing herself on her knees before this funeral couch, stretched her arms toward her protectress, as if to say, —

“O mother! you would not have repulsed me. If I had come to you, even more guilty still, you would have had pity on me. Your great age, your feeble sight, prevented you from seeing my condition, but you would have pardoned me. And they have driven me away!”

Is it only by cruelty that we can show the unfortunate the way to repentance?

Sister Anne passed the entire night beside the bed of Marguerite. She prayed from the bottom of her heart to her who had stood in the place of her mother; she besought the departed to protect her still, and during this sorrowful night the thought of Frederic did not come once to trouble her spiritual task.

The next day at dawn Sister Anne went to the wood to wait for the passing of the old shepherd who exchanged bread for milk. The villager was not long in coming. He was a man of sixty years, but still strong and robust. He had passed a part of his life in the forests, and, like Sister Anne, he

was almost a stranger to all that went on in the village, which is the world for an inhabitant of the wood.

The girl took him by the hand, and seemed to beseech him to follow her to the cottage. The old shepherd allowed himself to be led, and she took him to Marguerite. The old mountaineer looked on, apparently unmoved; the habit of a solitary life sometimes renders one indifferent to the sorrows of others. Anne nevertheless made him such pitiful signs that it was impossible not to comprehend her meaning, and he consented to perform for her the service she asked of him.

The mute led him to the fig-tree in the garden, under which Marguerite had loved to sit; she pointed with her finger to the earth; it was there she wished her adoptive mother to repose. The old shepherd soon dug the grave, after which he carried out the body of the good woman and covered it with earth. Sister Anne erected a cross over the spot, the only monument she could raise to her benefactress, but she came often to moisten it with her tears. How many magnificent mausoleums there are over which no one has ever shed a tear!

The old shepherd was gone; Sister Anne was again alone, and forever! She felt then with renewed vividness the loss she had sustained. Marguerite had talked little; for some time she had slept almost constantly; but she was there, and the

poor little thing had not felt herself abandoned by all the world. Only one person could console her, but he did not come, and each day destroyed the little hope that still sustained her. Sister Anne would not have had the strength to support her anguish if she had not felt that soon Heaven would give her one who would soften her grief. She would be a mother, and in that other existence she could forget her own. She had already suffered for him. She had been flouted and scorned. She would never again find in the village either comfort or protection; but the mere sight of her child would make her forget all her torments. Is it not just that often in the very cause of our sorrows we find our consolation?

As the days rolled on they changed to a sweet and grateful memory the vivid sorrow which Sister Anne had felt for the loss of Marguerite. But time, which softens the regrets of friendship, cannot lessen the anguish of one who loves. The image of Frederic was more than ever present in the thoughts of the young mute; she had nothing to distract her from it. She saw no one, and would not her dream of motherhood make her desire more than ever the presence of the father of her child?

During the time that Frederic had passed with Sister Anne, he had spoken to her sometimes of the world, of his father, and often of Paris, the city of his birth. In the course of the day, when

they were seated together on the border of the brook, it pleased him to picture the great city to the young girl. He described to her some of his pleasures, the theatres, and those brilliant promenades which made Paris such a delightful place of residence. The poor child could not comprehend all he told her, but she listened eagerly, testifying to her interest by opening wide her great eyes, by naïve movements, and by unexpected signs of surprise, which amused Frederic greatly. She often urged him to tell these stories, for one cannot make love continually. Some people say this is a great pity; they forget that one does not prize what one may have at any time.

All that Frederic had said was graven in the memory of Sister Anne. Each day she thought more of it, and said to herself, —

“He is no doubt in that great city of which he told me so often, in Paris, where he was born. Perhaps his father prevents him from coming to find me, but if I could go and join him, — if I could throw myself into his arms! Oh, I am sure he would be glad to see me! Then he would keep me near him, and I would never leave him, and I should be so happy! But how can I find this Paris?”

Each day the desire to go and find her lover grew stronger in this loving soul. She could not persuade herself that Frederic had forgotten her; she was convinced that he did not come because

he was forcibly kept from her. Since Marguerite was dead, there was no longer any reason why Sister Anne should remain in the wood. In her condition, and with her infirmity, no doubt her cottage was preferable to the danger, the pain, the fatigue, which she must encounter in a journey such as she wished to undertake; but a woman who loves deeply sees neither danger nor pain; she braves all, sustained by the hope of seeing once more the object of her affection. Sister Anne knew nothing of the world, she could not speak, and she carried in her bosom the fruit of her love; yet she decided to leave her asylum, to go in search of her lover. She will brave every peril, endure misery and privation of every kind; and, should she spend years in her quest, she will not be disheartened, for it will seem to her that each day she is nearer to her lover.

Her resolution made, she thought only of executing it; but she could not bear to abandon her cottage and the grave of Marguerite. Once more appealing to the old shepherd, she led him one morning to her dwelling, and showed him the little packet containing her clothes. She put it on her back, to indicate that she was about to travel. Then she made him sit down in the cottage, as if to say, "Stay here, it is all yours; I only beg you to take care of the fig-tree which shades my mother's grave, and of these poor animals, which have so long been my only companions."

The old shepherd understood her easily, but, although the cottage was a palace in his eyes, he could not take advantage of Sister Anne. The gift she had bestowed made him richer than he ever expected to be, but he tried, nevertheless, to dissuade her from a project which seemed to him senseless.

"Where do you wish to go, my child?" he said to her. "In two months you will be a mother, and yet you leave your house and go travelling! You poor little mute! Who will take you in, who will care for you? How will you ask your way? Be careful, little one, this is a very foolish thing to do, — at least wait awhile."

Sister Anne had made her decision; nothing could turn her from it. She shook her head as she looked at the old herdsman, and lifted her eyes to heaven, as if to say, God will lead me and take pity on me.

The old shepherd still tried to keep her.

"And you need money," he said. "Little girl, in the world you can't get on without money. I haven't lived in the village much, but I know that. Hang it! I haven't any to give you for your cottage and all that's in it. That's worth money."

Sister Anne smiled, and then drawing from her bosom a small bag of gray cloth, she took from it four pieces of gold, which she showed the shepherd. It was Marguerite's treasure. Some

time before her death the good old woman had told the young mute to look under her bed in a corner of the cottage, where she found the little sack well rolled and fastened, and Marguerite said to her, —

“Take it, my daughter; it is for you. This is the fruit of my savings and of sixty years of toil. I intended it for you. This money will enable you to buy a larger flock of goats.”

At sight of the four pieces of gold the old shepherd had not a word to say, for he believed that with such an amount one could make the tour of the world.

“Go then, my child,” he said to her. “I will keep your cottage, and you know it will always be yours when you return.”

Sister Anne smiled sorrowfully, and then casting a last glance around her dwelling, took her little package in one hand, and in the other a stick on which she supported her steps in walking. She crossed the garden and said a last farewell to the grave of Marguerite. Her goats ran toward her, expectant that as usual she would lead them to the mountain. Sister Anne wept as she caressed them, for they had been her only friends, and something said to her, “You will never see them again.”

As she crossed the wood, what memories filled her heart! There is the spot where they sat so often. There is the brook where she saw him for

the first time, — where he told her he loved her. These places seemed still animated by his presence, and it was not without an effort that she decided to leave them. But to restore her courage, she said, “I will find him, and perhaps we will return together.”

She climbed the mountain and prostrated herself before the tree where Clotilda had perished. There she prayed her mother that from her place in heaven she would watch over her and guide her on her journey. At last she descended the side of the mountain toward the city, and walked in the direction in which Frederic had gone. She wished to follow in his footsteps.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRAVELS OF SISTER ANNE. THE FOREST

SINCE daybreak the young dumb girl had been on her way. The weather was cold but fine; a sharp frost had hardened the roads, silenced the brooks and arrested the floods. The fields were almost deserted, and the country people only crossed them reluctantly and in haste, as they hurried to return to their comfortable cottages to seek their warm chimney corners that they might enjoy the crackling blaze of the dry branches they had so laboriously gathered under the leafless boughs of the gloomy forest.

The sight of a bright fire is very cheerful in the long winter evenings to those who sit with their loved ones in the peaceful harbor of home, employed with their evening occupations and their song and laughter—endeavor to imagine what the lack of it means; the poor wayfarer, the mendicant who passes through the village, stops and looks with an envious eye, as at a forbidden paradise, when he sees it shining through a cottage window, deeming himself fortunate indeed, poor wretch, if he may warm himself in the open fields before a few bundles of straw to

which his companions in misfortune have set fire.

Sister Anne had only been walking four hours, and already she was interested in the novelty of the objects to be seen on every side.

Never having seen anything before but her cottage, her wood, and the village of Vizille, she paused in astonishment before a forge, before a mill, and before a country house which seemed to her a veritable castle. Everything was new to her, but how should she find her way in this world which seemed to her so great; how could she ever reach the city, the name of which she did not know, of the route to which she was ignorant? Sometimes these thoughts weakened her courage, when she would pause and look sorrowfully about her, and then, thinking of Frederic, would go on her way once more.

Toward the middle of the day she reached a hamlet. She knocked at the door of a peasant's house, and when it was opened to her she saw a young woman nursing a baby, while her four other children played about her. A good old woman watched the fire, and fed it with dry branches that she had gathered in the wood.

"What do you want, my friend?" asked the young mother.

Sister Anne gazed at the picture which was offered to her view, and could not turn her eyes from the baby clinging to its mother's breast. An

expression of joy animated her countenance, and she said to herself at this moment, "I also will nurse my baby, I shall receive its caresses, and I shall carry it at my breast."

"Tell us what you want," said the old woman without turning from the fire.

"O mother!" said the young woman, "see how pale she is, how she seems to be suffering! She is so young, and soon to be a mother; and she is walking about in this cold weather! You are going to join your husband no doubt?"

Sister Anne sighed; then, seeing that they awaited her reply, she signed to them that she could not speak.

"Ah, mon Dieu! Mother dear, she is a mute — poor young thing!"

"A mute!" cried the old woman. "What, my dear! can't you speak? Oh, but I am very sorry for you, poor child. You are dumb, and are you deaf also?"

Sister Anne signed to them that she could hear perfectly.

"Ah, that is very fortunate, truly," replied the old woman, approaching the young traveller, while the children looked at Sister Anne with curiosity, believing a mute to be unlike other people.

"Is it from an accident that you are dumb, my girl? Have you been so a long time? Was it from sickness? Can it be cured?"

"Mother," said the young woman, "let us first

attend to the needs of this poor creature; let us give her rest and refreshment. We will question her afterward."

They hastened to seat Anne before the fire. One child took her stick, another her bundle; the old woman got her something to eat, for the young mother could not leave the baby she was nursing. Sister Anne, deeply touched by their kindness to her, showed her gratitude by such eloquent gestures that the people of the cottage were full of sympathy.

"They are not all like the folks in my village," thought the young traveller. "Here they don't turn me out, they don't repulse me, they are good to me, they treat me like their own child. The world is not all so bad."

This kindness revived her courage, but she could not answer all the grandmother's questions. The women believed from her sign language that she was going to join her husband.

"He is probably in the city," said the old woman to her.

Sister Anne made an affirmative sign, and as the nearest city was Grenoble the peasants supposed that she was going there.

After having rested for several hours under this hospitable roof, Sister Anne was anxious to begin her journey again; but before she started she took from the little bag one of her pieces of gold, which she offered to the young woman.

"Keep it, keep it, my dear," said she; "we want nothing for what we have done. You are so much to be pitied in your affliction that you ought to be cared for freely wherever you go, but unfortunately everybody will not be of this opinion; some hearts are hard and unfeeling. You are going to the city; there you will need your money, for the city people will not refuse it."

Sister Anne showed her gratitude warmly to the young mother. She embraced her tenderly and her nursling also, and then left the cottage, after they had pointed out to her the road to Grenoble.

The young traveller could not go very fast. Unaccustomed to walking, her delicate condition hindered her, the little bundle wearied her, and she was often obliged to rest, sitting down upon a fallen tree, or a stone, or at the side of the road, and waiting there until her strength had returned sufficiently to begin her journey again.

Occasionally while she rested travellers passed her on the road. Those who were in carriages did not look at her; sometimes a man on horseback threw her a glance, but the foot passengers always stopped and spoke to her. Receiving no response they went on, some calling her stupid, others believing her to be impertinent because she did not deign to speak to them. Sister Anne looked at the passers-by with an air of surprise.

She smiled at the peasant who invited her to mount behind him on his horse, and she dropped her eyes when people were angry because she did not answer. The most curious were like the others; they ended by passing her by.

Toward the end of the day Sister Anne found herself near Grenoble, having followed exactly the route her friends had shown her. The sight of a large city caused her a new surprise, which increased at each step she took in its streets. She saw people there much more elegantly dressed than any in her native village. Astonished, embarrassed, she walked about, trembling at each step. The great houses, the shops, the continual movement of people coming and going, the constant noise, the curious way in which she was looked at,—everything distressed her. Poor girl! What would you do if you were in Paris?

It was night and she must seek shelter. Sister Anne dared not enter anywhere; the houses were all so stately that she feared she would not be received in such places. For a long time she wandered at random, not knowing where she went; but, almost overcome with fatigue, she finally decided to ask admission somewhere. The poor little thing did not know what an inn was, and thought she would be received in any house and would be given a bed if she were able to pay for it.

She knocked at the door of a modest-looking

house. It was opened to her, and she entered trembling.

"What do you want?" cried an old tailor, who acted as porter.

The young girl looked at him sorrowfully and made signs to indicate that she could not speak; but the porter did not notice these signs, and chose to repeat his question. Not receiving an answer, he rose in anger, ran to Sister Anne, took her by the arm and put her outside the door, saying, —

"Oh, you won't tell where you are going. Well, you won't come in here, young woman."

This reception was not encouraging; the poor orphan was again in the street, and although there were tears in her eyes, she recalled her courage, and decided to try another door. Here she was treated as a beggar, and again sent away. It seemed as if she could not endure any more; her sobs choked her. She seated herself, weeping, upon a stone bench before a door, but presently this door opened; an old couple came out, well wrapped up in coats and furs, and followed by a servant who carried a torch. As they passed they ordered Sister Anne to leave the bench, which belonged to their house, treating her as a beggar, a criminal, a ne'er-do-well, and threatening that if she did not go away they would put her in prison. Sister Anne rose trembling, and tried to carry her fatigue and sorrow still farther. The old people

went on, delighted with their achievement, promising themselves new glory from the story they would tell of the audacity of the lower classes, in the circle with which they expected to pass the evening.

The young girl, overcome by fatigue, could scarcely hold herself erect, and knew not where to direct her steps. The treatment she had received gave her a very melancholy impression of life in the city; but she must find a shelter for the night. She approached a brilliantly lighted house, of which the principal entrance was open, while several people were going in and out. She took one of her pieces of gold in her hand and ventured in, showing it as she entered. This time she had made a good choice, for she had found an inn, and the sight of the piece of gold insured her a favorable reception.

When the landlady perceived that the young traveller could not answer her, she thought she must talk for two; and, while she led her to the little chamber in which she was to sleep, she boasted of the advantages of her house, of the fine manner in which her inn was kept, asked her where she came from, and where she was going, and then interrupted herself suddenly, to exclaim, "But, good Lord! what a fool I am! I am asking you questions that you can't answer."

But she began again a moment later, and then said, "How cruel it is! I don't comprehend your



signs. I don't understand you at all; but that's all right, my child; you shall be served in a moment. Oh, if my nephew were only here! He knows mathematics and everything; he would understand you without any trouble; but he is away, poor boy,—he is employed now in the telegraph office at Lyons."

At last the landlady left Sister Anne, and after she had eaten a light supper she sought the rest of which she was so much in need. Sleep, poor girl, and may your dreams be so happy that for a moment you will forget your sufferings!

Sister Anne had heard her landlady affirm several times, "You are in the best hotel at Grenoble." She knew that this must be the name of the town to which she had come, and she remembered that Frederic had also mentioned this name in her presence. This recollection decided her not to leave the town until she had looked for him there. The next morning, after she had made her landlady understand that she would pass this day in Grenoble, she left the inn, and started to inspect the city, which seemed to her immense.

As Sister Anne walked on, she looked at each house, each window; if Frederic were there, she thought, he would see her. He would call her or run after her. Sometimes she paused, believing she had recognized his figure; but she knew instantly she was mistaken. She spent the entire day in this fashion, and only returned to the inn



when it was so dark that she could no longer distinguish the objects about her.

"You have gone over the whole city," said the landlady to her. "It is very pretty, my faith. Grenoble is a very pretty town; but it is not so big as Lyons, and Lyons doesn't compare with Paris."

At the name of Paris the young traveller started with joy, and pressed quickly the landlady's arm, to indicate to her that this was her destination, but the landlady was not very quick of comprehension.

"I expect you are going to Lyons," she said to her. "It is not very far; not more than fifteen good leagues. I am sure you can't go very fast in your condition, but you ought to get there in three or four days at most."

Sister Anne mounted sorrowfully to her chamber. How could she ever find the way to Paris if she could not make anyone understand that she wanted to go there? This thought filled her with despair, but she besought her mother to guide her in her travels. She prayed again, and hope rose anew in her soul. Without hope what would become of the unfortunate?

The next day the young girl prepared to leave the inn, and the landlady presented her a bill, which the poor little thing did not understand at all; but she gave her one of her gold pieces, and very little of it was returned to her. City people

make you pay for every bow and every courtesy. They had been so very polite to Sister Anne that her sojourn at the inn cost her a little dear.

They had shown her the way to Lyons, and she started once more on her journey, her little bundle and her stick in her hand. But between Grenoble and Lyons there are mountainous paths and thick woods,—is it not easy to be lost in them? She prayed to God to be her guide. She walked a part of the day, and in the evening, overcome with fatigue, though she had made very little progress, she entered a farmhouse, where they consented to let her sleep in the barn; but she could have passed the night anywhere with only a shelter from the cold. She could sleep upon straw as if it were a bed of down; the walk had at least insured her some hours of sound slumber.

Her stay at the farm had not exhausted her purse, but the young traveller began to see that she must be careful of her money, which was almost the only talisman that could secure her a shelter. Hospitality is very rare. The most humane people think they do enough for the poor wayfarer if they give him a penny and a morsel of bread; they do not invite him to come under their roof. We are a long way from the time when it was considered an honor to give refreshment to a stranger without asking about his rank or his fortune, when each one shared with the passer-by

his fire, his meal and his bed. Other times, other manners! We have become proud and selfish, and we wish to share nothing. In return, we have good friends who come to eat our soup and drink our wine, even sometimes to make love to our wives, and when they leave our house they say all sorts of unpleasant things about us; but of course this is because they love us, and they are jealous of our other friends.

About the middle of the second day after she had left Grenoble, Sister Anne was lost in thought and in sad memories, and she did not notice that she had wandered from the straight road that had been pointed out to her; not observing it until weariness made her feel the need of repose, and she looked about her in search of the village which should be near by, according to the directions which had been given her in the morning.

The place where she found herself was gloomy and deserted, and there was no house in sight. She mounted a little hill, and could see nothing but an immense forest of firs. To the left, a torrent filled with broken ice plunged into a deep and tortuous ravine; to the right there was a bare mountain, all rocks, with no trace of human habitation.

The young girl began to be afraid that she had lost her way. She remained undecided for several minutes as to what she would do; both to right and left the roads seemed very bad. She did not

wish to go back, so she decided to follow the road leading into the forest. After she had walked for about half an hour she found herself before those superb firs which grow straight toward heaven, and of which the branches, although they had lost their adornment, seemed still to lift themselves proudly into the air and brave the winds and frosts.

A good broad road led into the forest; Sister Anne did not hesitate to take it. Hoping that this road, on which there were traces of carriages and horses, would lead her to the village she was in search of, or to a neighboring town, she overcame her fatigue and hurried on, anxious to arrive before night. As she advanced on this route, where she could see no one, and which was bordered on each side by thick woods, its sombre aspect chilled the spirit of the traveller. The poor mute went on, her eyes seeking the end of this long road, but seeing only dark firs, and nothing that could indicate the neighborhood of a village, and her heart contracted. Night began to cover the earth with its shadows. Her eye could no longer perceive the paths which crossed from right to left, and at length Sister Anne, whose courage was greater than her strength, found it impossible to go any farther.

It was evident that she must pass the night in the forest; she was not at all afraid; she had never heard of robbers, of which there were none

in her wood, but she shrank from the cold, and in her delicate situation it seemed dreadful to pass the night in the forest, to await the dawn without a shelter, but it had to be done nevertheless. She seated herself close to a great tree ; on leaving a village or town, she was careful to provide herself with food for the way, and now she ate some bread and dry nuts ; then, wrapping herself as well as she could in her clothes, she put her little bundle under her head and prepared for the sleep which could not fail to come to her after the fatigues of the day.

It was midnight when the young girl opened her eyes, and the moon, which shed its light over the road on the side of which she had fallen asleep, illuminated the strange picture which was spread before her waking eyes.

Four men surrounded Sister Anne ; they were dressed like miserable wood-cutters, in blouses, and wide trousers supported by broad belts, and wore large hats, some with the brim drooping, the others with it pushed up in front, revealing faces which expressed neither sweetness nor humanity. The hair of all floated in disorder, and their long beards added to the sinister look of their features. Each held in his hand a gun upon which he leaned, while in the belt of each was a hunting-knife and a pair of pistols.

Two of these men leaned over Sister Anne, another was on his knees and held a dark lantern

with which he lighted the face of the young girl. A fourth looked at her but also seemed to be watching the road to be sure that all was quiet in that direction.

The sight of these four figures absorbed in studying her caused Sister Anne an involuntary shudder, and, although ignorant of the extent of the peril which threatened her, she felt a terror which she could not quite understand, and closed her eyes again to avoid their stares.

"What the devil have we found here?" said one of the thieves leaning over Sister Anne. "I am afraid it is nothing very much; I don't know whether it is worth while to stop for it."

"But why not?" said the one who held the lantern; "anything is better than nothing. But wait! Look, Pierre; she's got a bundle under her head."

"Nothing but miserable rags. Don't you see she's a woman who works in the fields?"

"Well, is she dead or is she asleep?" asked a third. "See here, Red Top, give her a push. Must we pass the night looking at this poor wretch?"

"By the Lord, it seems to me there's nothing better to do. The road is perfectly quiet; isn't that true, Jacques?"

Jacques was the one who at a little distance seemed to be keeping guard. As he heard his comrade's words he approached the group sur-

rounding the young girl, exclaiming, "Curse it! the night is unlucky."

"Not so bad," cried Red Top, who was looking steadily at the young girl. "Morbleu! She's mighty pretty, this woman."

It was at this moment that Sister Anne opened her eyes, having decided to appeal to the compassion of the men who surrounded her, and, not having understood their language, she did not suspect their profession.

"Wait, look," cried Red Top; "there! she's going to wake up. She has beautiful eyes, I wager. I am curious to know what she will say."

Sister Anne gazed beseechingly at the men about her, stretching her hands toward them, and seeming to implore their pity.

"Oh, don't be afraid," said Pierre; "we won't do you any harm. But where did you come from? Where are you going? What put it into your head to sleep in our forest?"

The young girl, supposing the thieves to be wood-choppers, tried to make them understand that she had lost her way.

"Halloo, here's a woman who can't talk," cried Jacques. "What do you say to that? Have you lost your tongue from fright? Come on now, talk, morbleu!"

Sister Anne rose, and made signs again to show that she could not speak.

"What the devil sort of woman is that?" cried

Pierre, while Red Top, throwing the light from his lantern on the young girl, presently burst into a great laugh.

"Ho, ho! comrades, mute or not, she's a maid no longer, she has a man somewhere!"

This pleasantry was welcomed by a ferocious laugh from the other thieves, and the four bent their gaze on the young mute, who, not understanding the cause of their gayety, but unable to endure their looks, dropped her eyes timidly to the earth and stood trembling in the midst of them.

"Come on; let's leave this woman," resumed Pierre. "She's a poor deaf mute, — we don't want to bother with her!"

"A deaf mute!" exclaimed Red Top, in whose eyes glittered a frightful expression. "Why, such a woman as that is a real treasure; and besides, this one is pretty, she pleases me, — I'll make her my companion by and by."

"Go on, Red Top, are you joking?"

"Why, no, thunder! a deaf mute! think how valuable she'd be to us in our profession."

Sister Anne, trembling, had not heard the conversation of the thieves, but, noticing their indecision, and fearing that they would not give her shelter, of which she felt the need now more than ever, for the cold had stiffened all her limbs, drew her little treasure from her bosom. Having learned that the sight of money usually smoothed away

all difficulties, she took a piece of gold from her little bag and offered it with a supplicating air to one of the thieves.

"Oh, she has money and she offers it to us. That's good, parbleu! give it here, give it here, girl!" As he said these words Pierre seized the purse from Sister Anne, who stood aghast at seeing her treasure torn from her, while the thieves counted eagerly the contents of the little bag.

"Three pieces of gold, my faith!" cried Jacques, and the faces of the brigands shone with ferocious joy. "That's more than we've got in five days."

"I told you the find wasn't so bad!" cried Red Top. "Come on, comrades, let's take this woman to our den, and then enjoy ourselves."

As he spoke the robber took Sister Anne by the arm and led her toward the middle of the forest, Jacques taking care of her bundle, Pierre following him, Franck, the fourth brigand, having seized the lantern from the hands of Red Top and gone on in advance, to light the pathway for his companions.

The young girl walked unresisting in the midst of the thieves, not suspecting the horror of her situation, but thinking they were taking her to their home, to be with their wives and children. Nevertheless, the ferocious features of the four men, their brusqu  and rough manners, the arms which they carried, and their wild and singular talk filled the poor little thing with a terror which

almost deprived her of consciousness. Often to reassure herself she glanced timidly at her conductors, hoping to find in their faces an expression of pity and of compassion; but whenever she raised her eyes she met those of Red Top fastened upon her and gleaming with coarse passion. The features of this man increased the terror which his manners inspired in the young girl. His hair clustered in crisp, short curls of the color which had led his companions to name him Red Top. His eyes, of a pale gray, rolled in their orbits with astonishing quickness. There was always a ferocious smile on his lips, under a thick mustache of the same color as his hair. A great scar crossed his nose and extended almost to his left ear, giving his face a frightful expression. This man, with one arm passed about the body of the young mute, held her up while he made her walk through the forest paths; while the other thieves, by their manner and conversation, increased every instant the fright of Sister Anne.

The thieves inhabited a miserable hut in the thickest part of the forest, where they passed the day, living like poor wood-cutters. They took care to conceal their arms in a cave which they had dug under their retreat; but at night they armed themselves to the teeth and stationed themselves on the road, where they attacked travellers if they believed themselves strong enough to overcome them.

Sister Anne was surprised at the length of the road which led to the house of these men, and still more so at the difficult paths through which she was obliged to find her way. At last, after an hour's walk, they made her descend into a ravine, across a thick jungle of brushwood. A little light was visible, which came from the window of a hut. The thieves whistled several times, and a woman was not slow in opening the door.

The sight of one of her own sex for a moment restored the courage of Sister Anne, but when she looked at the woman who stood on the threshold of the cabin, she felt her dawning hopes vanish away, for the appearance of the thieves' companion was not calculated to bring calm to the soul of an unhappy traveller. This woman was of great height, and of a fearful emaciation, with very pronounced features, and an expression of calm cruelty which seemed to say that she was absolutely devoid of feeling. She was livid in color, a red handkerchief covered her head, and some rags of clothes scarcely concealed her distorted body.

"We are home; it's us, Christine," cried the robbers, as they approached the cabin. "We've taken a prize. We've brought you a companion with whom you'll not dispute much."

At these words Christine advanced toward them, and tearing the lantern from Franck threw its light into Sister Anne's face, and, after examining her attentively, said in a harsh voice, —

"What's all this about?"

"Why, it's a woman, don't you see? But it's a rare woman; she's a deaf mute."

"A deaf mute! Great find, my faith! and what are you going to do with her?"

"Oh, that's my business," cried Red Top, in a voice which resounded through the echoes of the forest. "I have taken this woman for myself. She pleases me; she suits me exactly. Don't you look crosswise at her, or I'll hang you to the tallest pine in the forest."

This threat did not frighten Christine, who continued to look at the young girl, and on perceiving her condition smiled ironically and murmured some scornful words between her teeth.

A blow which made her recoil several feet was Red Top's response to the remark of the hideous Christine. She approached him with a threatening air, but Pierre threw himself between them.

"Let up, children!" he cried; "that's enough of this game. We don't want to have any more rows here. Go on, Christine, and get our supper ready. We are as hungry as wolves."

While this altercation went on between the thieves and their companion, the unfortunate mute felt a sensation of horror, of fright, such as she had never known before. The sight of this woman, the propositions of these men, whose ferocity she began to divine, the appearance of their dreadful retreat,—all this made her realize the

dangers with which she was surrounded. But what could she do? What would become of her? She would gladly have been far from this den. She would have preferred the severest cold in the open forest to such a shelter as this; but it was no longer possible to fly, and besides, they had taken her treasure, they had stolen her money and her clothes. Or did they expect to return them to her? She did not dare to hope for this, and at each instant she found a new cause for her terror. Her whole body trembled; her teeth chattered; her knees sank from under her. "Look," cried Red Top, as he supported her; "we've frightened the pretty traveller to death. Never mind; it's all right, little woman. Come in and warm yourself."

The thieves entered the cottage, which was divided into two parts. The first was the apartment which the inhabitants of this horrible place usually occupied. There they ate, and slept upon bundles of straw thrown in a corner. A chimney in which a great fire was lighted warmed the room, which was the largest and brightest in the cabin. The side room had no chimney, but only a window looking into the forest. Christine slept there, and used it as storeroom for provisions and firewood.

At sight of this horrible place Sister Anne paused in the doorway, and had not strength to advance. The interior was dirty and blackened by smoke. One corner was filled with the straw

on which the men slept, their arms hung from the wall, and the air was heavy with the odor of some huge pieces of meat which were roasting before the fire, for the supper of the robbers. Red Top carried in Sister Anne, and seated her before the fire, saying, —

“Quiet down, now, and get warm. The supper will make you feel better.”

“Imbecile! You talk to her as if she could hear you,” cried Jacques.

“That’s true. I’d forgotten all about it.”

“And how do you know she’s deaf?” said Franck. “Perhaps she’s making believe; she may be only mute.”

“Then we should have to cut out her tongue,” replied Red Top. “But it’s easy to see that she’s both, and that she can’t talk because she’s deaf. Ah, you don’t understand that, you others; but as to me, you see I’ve travelled, and I’m less stupid than you. So I know that deaf mutes are only dumb because they can’t hear. Besides, watch this woman; it’s very easy to see that she don’t hear anything we say.”

Sister Anne was so overcome by terror, suffering and fatigue that, since her entrance into the cottage, she had seemed unconscious of all that passed about her. But she heard the conversation of the brigands very distinctly, and a half-recognized presentiment warned her not to correct the error of the bandits. It was much better they

should believe her deaf. In that case they would not hesitate to speak of their projects and designs in her presence. She would then know what to hope and what to fear ; and, without intending it, her captors might provide her with the opportunity to escape. This hope sustained the courage of the young girl, and she endeavored to conceal the emotion which the thieves' conversation roused in her.

The brigands laid aside their arms while they were waiting for supper, and entertained one another with a recital of their great deeds. The poor little mute saw with horror that she was in the company of scoundrels capable of every crime ; but she drew courage from the excess of her despair. She knew the extent of the perils that threatened her, and saw that she could only free herself from them by cleverness and address. If death struck her alone, she would not have dreaded it, but she wished to preserve the life of the little one she carried within. Maternal love has inspired many acts of heroism. This sentiment sustained Sister Anne, and gave her strength to cope with her frightful situation.

Christine set a table in the midst of the chamber, and covered it with glasses, bottles, and meat. The thieves sat down and began to eat their supper ; they gave themselves up freely to the expression of their brutal joy. Sister Anne remained seated before the fire ; Red Top brought her some

wine, some bread and roast meat. She bowed her thanks to him, and forced herself to eat a little, both to restore her strength and conceal her terror.

"You see that woman, there," said Red Top to his companions. "Well, I'll wager she's as sweet as a lamb. I'll do anything I please with her."

"Don't trust to manners," said Christine, who had seated herself near the thieves. "It's easy to fool men with such airs, and faces are deceitful."

"Yours is not, for you look like a sister of Lucifer."

This pleasantry made all the gentlemen laugh; they filled their glasses and emptied them rapidly; the more they drank, the more they talked. The dreadful Christine was at their head. Red Top alone was thinking of Sister Anne, and he did not entirely lose his head.

"Where do you suppose this woman came from?" asked one of the thieves. "She doesn't seem like a woman that works in the fields."

"Parbleu! it's some girl that's been betrayed. Her lover has left her, and she's running over the world to find him. That's the history of all the girls that listen to gentlemen."

Sister Anne dried the tears that began to run down her cheeks, for she felt that this man had spoken the truth.

"Thunder!" said Christine, "if I had a girl

and she made a misstep, I'd strangle her with my own hands."

"Now look at that," said Jacques. "It's a pity you haven't any children, they would have been so handsome."

"I don't care what this woman is," said Red Top. "She's not going away from here; and you, Christine, don't you interfere with her, or you remember what I promised you."

"Yes, I'd like to see you do it. Wait; you'd better go and console her. I believe she's crying now. Give her a kiss."

"Yes, and we too!" cried the other thieves, heated by the fumes of the wine. "We'll console her too! Let's all give her a little hug. It'll cheer her up."

As they said this, Red Top's three companions rose to go toward Sister Anne, but the red head placed himself between them, took a pistol in each hand and exclaimed in a formidable voice, —

"Don't you go a step nearer, or I'll kill you! This woman is mine! She belongs to me, for I found her on the road when you, imbeciles, would have passed right by; you didn't see her at all. It was I who wanted to bring her here. I said I would make her my wife, and, death of my life! if any man touches her I'll kill him!"

These words stopped the thieves, who knew their companion, and were aware that the consequences would follow the threat very quickly; so

they contented themselves with laughing at the jealousy of Red Top. Sister Anne, frozen with terror at this scene, withdrew to a corner of the room, and threw herself on her knees before the thieves.

Red Top approached her and endeavored to tranquillize her ; then, for fear of a new enterprise on the part of his comrades, he took her into the other room, showed her a wretched bed, and made her a sign that she was to rest there ; then he went out and closed the door upon her.

Sister Anne was alone in a tiny apartment, where there was no light ; but the wall was badly joined, and allowed the brilliance from the other room to enter, so she was able to distinguish things about her. The young girl had pretended to prepare herself for repose on the wretched mattress ; but she rose presently, and, lending an attentive ear, listened to what the thieves were saying. They continued to drink and sing.

If she could only escape while this was going on ! She felt all about, she found a window which should open on the forest, and the house was so near the ground she could easily jump out. But presently her hand came in contact with strong bars which closed the window and opposed her passage. Poor little thing ! she experienced a shock of disappointment more cruel than anything she had endured before. At the very moment when she thought she was certain to recover her

liberty, she lost her last hope ; when she saw no longer any possibility of escaping from this horrible prison, it seemed as if she were dying a second death. She fell fainting upon the couch, and endeavored to stifle in her hands the groans that escaped from her bosom.

CHAPTER IX

THE STRANGER

THE long and tedious night passed in this manner; the thieves at length fell asleep before the fire and, fortunately for poor Sister Anne, their infamous companion did the same, which prevented her from taking her usual place on the mattress beside the prisoner.

The unfortunate girl lay awake through the long night, listening eagerly and trembling with fear at the slightest sound that became audible from the next room, and praying earnestly to kind Heaven that it would send some one to liberate her.

Morning, however, brought new terrors to the helpless girl. At daybreak the thieves awakened, they hastily hid their murderous weapons and started into the forest to resume their pretended occupation as woodcutters. But before they did so Red Top went into the smaller room where Sister Anne lay to speak to her; he smiled at the defenceless and terrified child, chucked her under the chin, and muttered between his teeth, "This evening, my beauty, when I come from the wood I'll say two words to you." The unfortunate

girl was obliged to submit to these horrible caresses. It was only by a great effort that she restrained her indignation; but he departed to follow his companions, after he had warned Christine to watch over the young woman.

When Sister Anne was alone with the thieves' companion she was obliged to endure all the ill humor of this wretched creature, who was jealous of her presence, and in revenge sought to cover the poor girl with insults, knowing that she could not complain of her. She laughed at her tears and at her prayers, and the poor little thing felt that she should die if she were not soon saved from this horrible prison.

It was night when the four brigands returned. They snatched some food and then took their arms. Red Top did not follow their example.

"Well, and aren't you going to take a run with us tonight?" asked his companions.

"No, not yet; I'll join you later; but this evening I want to say two words to my little mute."

As he said this a frightful smile glittered in the eyes of the bandit, whose gaze rested each instant on Sister Anne.

"All right, I understand," said Pierre. "We'll let it pass for this evening, but love ought not to make you forget your duty."

"And if we should run across another post-chaise," said Jacques, "we can't attack it."

"But that's not very likely to happen just this once. Besides, I'll rejoin you later."

"Good, good; we'll let it pass this time, and if we take a big prize he'll have no share in it."

"That's perfectly fair, comrades."

As the thieves went out they looked back and smiled at the young mute, who did not yet divine the danger which threatened her, nor did she understand the smile of the brigands. Seeing that Red Top did not follow his companions, she shuddered with fear, and her eyes sought Christine, as if she hoped for protection from the woman; but Christine glanced with a mocking air from one to the other, and then entered the adjoining chamber, closing the door violently behind her.

Sister Anne made a movement as if to follow the thieves' companion, but when she saw that this was impossible she fell back upon the pile of straw where she had been sitting; a convulsive trembling seized her, — she was alone with the brigand.

Red Top seated himself before the fireplace and stirred the fire; then he lit a pipe and smoked for some moments, interrupting himself only to drink and to look at Sister Anne. The poor girl sat trembling in the corner of the room, where she had gone to be as far as possible from the thief, who threw his inflamed glance upon her, as he exclaimed from time to time, "Very good. Thousand thunders! she has superb eyes, and mighty

fine teeth. She'll look still better in a few months, too; but she's well enough now, and these fools, who couldn't see that. Oh, I wouldn't give her up, comrades! We don't often take such fine prizes."

These words increased the terror of the poor mute, which redoubled when Red Top, who had not remained at home merely to smoke and drink, made her a sign to approach him; she pretended not to understand, and lowered her eyes. Then the thief rose and advanced toward her. The young girl scarcely breathed. The brigand threw himself beside her on the straw. She tried to rise and leave him, but he held her forcibly, and putting his arm around her bent his horrible face to her head. The poor little thing covered her eyes with her hand so as not to see the bandit.

"Halloo! you might think she trembled," cried Red Top, as he burst into a fit of ferocious laughter. "Why, really, my dear, I didn't mean to be cruel to you. Anyone can see you have not been used to that."

As he said this he approached still nearer and tried to kiss the lips of the young girl; but she recalled her courage with a great effort, and repulsed him with all her force, and then, profiting by his surprise, she rose quickly and ran to the other end of the chamber, placing the table before her from which the thieves had eaten supper.

Red Top looked at her in astonishment; but

he merely smiled again, and said, "Oh, you are going to give us a little bad temper. Well, that's really funny. Do you think you can resist me?"

The thief rose, and walked towards Sister Anne. With a powerful kick he sent the table to the other end of the room; then he seized the young mute, who struggled in vain, and lifting her in his arms carried her to the pile of straw which he had just quitted. Sister Anne collected all her courage, all her strength to resist the brigand who intended to triumph over her. He laughed at first at her defence and her opposition; but at length he became furious at her obstinate resistance, and did his best to overpower the poor girl. This horrible struggle lasted a long time, but the unfortunate child felt her strength diminish. Tears and sobs strangled her, and she might have become the prey of the scoundrel, when suddenly heavy blows resounded on the door of the hut.

"Who the devil is coming now?" cried the thief. "My comrades can make all the fuss they want to, but I shan't open the door."

At this moment a strange voice was heard exclaiming, "Open the door, please! Save me and you will be well rewarded!"

This voice was not that of any of Red Top's companions. The thief stopped in confusion, and listened in terror, while Sister Anne threw herself on her knees and thanked Heaven, which had come to her succor.

Christine came quickly from the other chamber and ran to Red Top with an anxious air. "They are knocking, do you hear?" she said. "It is a strange voice."

"Yes, morbleu! I hear it well. Go and look out of the window, and try to see if it is only one man."

Christine went, and came back in a moment saying, "Yes, he is all alone."

"In that case we will open," said Red Top, "but we'll be prudent until our friends come back."

After he had replaced the table in the middle of the room Red Top took his pipe again and seated himself before the fire, while Christine opened the door to the person who had just knocked.

The stranger who entered the cabin was an elderly man. His dress bespoke easy circumstances, and his manners were those of high rank; but he was without a hat, his clothes were in disorder, and the pallor of his countenance testified to the fright he had sustained. He hurried into the cabin, and scarcely seemed to breathe until he saw that the door was closed and bolted after him.

"Pardon, pardon, good people," he said, turning to Red Top and Christine. "You see I am very much upset. I have undoubtedly disturbed your evening, but in opening your door to me you have saved my life."

"Why, how is that, monsieur?" said Red Top, with an air of interest.

"I've just been attacked, my friends. It was down there on the road which crosses the forest. I was in my carriage with my servant. The postilion urged on the horses. Suddenly the brigands ran out of the woods, sprang at the horses' heads, and fired in the postilion's face. The poor fellow fell dead; the carriage stopped; they made me alight with my servant, while one of the thieves searched the vehicle. During this time I took advantage of the moment when these wretches had not their eyes upon me and I plunged into the forest, choosing always the thickest and most remote paths. At last I reached here, the light from your window guiding me, and I knocked at your door."

"You have done well, monsieur," said Red Top, looking at Christine significantly. "Sit down before the fire. You are safe; get warm and comfortable."

"Oh, you are too good," said the traveller, seating himself beside the fire. "But my unfortunate servant, — what do you suppose has become of him? Will they kill him?"

"Oh, that's not probable. After they have robbed him they will let him go free. They killed the postilion because they had to stop him. Oh, I know all about that; there are a great many robbers in this cursed forest."

"I ought not to have taken this road. It was out of my way, but I wanted to see the country."

"And these rascals, — did they rob you, monsieur?"

"No, thank Heaven; they were about to do so when I ran away. I have at least saved my pocketbook and my purse."

"Well, my faith, that's very lucky," said Red Top, looking again at Christine. "Never mind, monsieur; settle down and try to forget this horrible event. We will do our best to entertain you, but you mustn't think of leaving before tomorrow; that would be very imprudent."

"That was not my intention, if you will be kind enough to let me stay."

"Why, of course, it would give us great pleasure. Go on, Christine; be quick; get our guest some supper."

While this conversation was going on Sister Anne did not cease to examine the stranger. Although his face was severe, she thought it inspired interest and respect. She trembled as she realized that this man had only escaped one peril to fall into another. She knew now all the rascality of the inhabitants of this hovel. She feared for the life of the traveller. Her eyes were constantly fixed upon him, as if they would warn him of the dangers which surrounded him.

But the stranger had not yet seen the young girl who was seated on the ground in the corner

of the room. He had scarcely recovered from the emotion which he had experienced. He approached the fire and rarely looked about him.

"It is very lucky that the thieves did not follow you," said Red Top, as he offered the traveller a glass of wine.

"Well, as I fled, I heard a great noise of horses' feet, and I think that was what saved me."

"Oh, you heard horses coming?" asked Red Top with great anxiety.

"Yes; at least, I thought so. I was very much excited. It was either more brigands or the police in pursuit of them."

"Well, yes; it might have been that."

"I have been in many battles, but I confess I do not love to meet thieves. Bravery is often useless against such wretches; besides, I had no arms with me."

"Oh, you had no arms?"

"No; I left my pistols in the carriage, and they didn't give me time to get them."

Red Top appeared to be reflecting; since the stranger had spoken of hearing the noise of horses' feet upon the road, he had not been so much at ease.

"I suppose you are a wood-cutter," said the traveller.

"Yes, monsieur, I am a wood-cutter, and there is my wife," said Red Top, pointing to Christine, who was putting the supper on the table.

"And are you not afraid in the midst of this forest?"

"Why, what have we to be afraid of? We are not rich enough to tempt thieves. Go on, Christine; hurry up. Monsieur will want to rest a little after he has eaten his supper."

"Oh, there's no hurry about it."

The stranger had become more calm, and began to look about him with some interest. As he examined the chamber where he was, he at last saw Sister Anne, seated upon a bundle of straw. Her eyes were fixed upon him with an expression so strange that he could not fail to notice it. The traveller was surprised, and he studied the face of the young mute for some time with much attention. Her features were pale and bore traces of her suffering. He seemed astonished at the manner in which she looked at him.

"Who is this young girl?" he said, addressing Christine. "I had not noticed her before."

"That? Oh, she's nothing very much," replied the big woman in a dry tone.

"Is she not your child?"

"No, monsieur," said Red Top; "she is an unfortunate deaf mute. I found her in the forest, and we have taken her in for charity. She is about to become a mother, and I felt very sorry for her."

"That feeling does you honor, monsieur. This unfortunate girl is so young, and has such a sweet

face. Do you know where she came from, or the name of her parents?"

"How the devil should I know anything about a deaf and dumb woman; and anyway, it doesn't matter. She is almost imbecile, I believe, but I will keep her here."

As she heard these words Sister Anne rose, and advanced softly toward the stranger. She looked at him always with the same glance of interest and compassion.

"Well, what's she doing now?" said Red Top. "The poor girl has really lost her reason. Here, Christine; make her go into the other room. It is time she went to bed."

Christine pushed the little mute roughly to force her into the adjoining chamber. Sister Anne decided to go with much regret. She did not wish to lose sight of the traveller, in whom she felt a lively interest; but she must obey. She walked slowly toward the other room, looking at the stranger until the last moment. Touched by her attention, he followed her with his eyes until the door of the other room closed upon her.

Christine had entered the little chamber with Sister Anne. She looked out of the window and seemed troubled because the other brigands had not returned. The young mute had thrown herself upon her couch, not to sleep, but to think of some means of saving the stranger, of warning him of the danger which threatened him if he

remained in the cabin. How could she approach him to make him comprehend it? At this moment Red Top entered the chamber, closing the door after him carefully; then he approached Christine, and, as he believed that Sister Anne could not hear, he did not hesitate to discuss his plans.

"Well, now, you don't hear them coming?" said Red Top.

"No; I have heard nothing."

"It's very singular; it's a long time since this man came. What can they be doing in the forest? I feel very uneasy; this traveller spoke of horses and of the police. If our friends have been arrested?"

"The devil! You don't think they would betray us?"

"Listen. When this stranger has eaten his supper and gone to sleep, I will go out and see if I can discover what has happened. If our fellows are in the forest, I know where to find them. If they have been taken, or have run off, we will take advantage of the stranger's sleep to get rid of him, and with what he has on him we'll do pretty well if we make ourselves safe by leaving the forest."

"That's a fine thought; give this man a good supper, so that he will sleep quickly, then when you come back we shall know what to do. Meanwhile, I'll lie down and get a little sleep."

"Yes; don't be uneasy. I'll wake you up when I need you."

Red Top went out to rejoin the traveller, and the hideous Christine threw herself upon the bed by the side of Sister Anne. It is impossible to say what this poor child felt as she lay beside this woman who had just planned a murder with the most revolting coolness; but the poor little thing did not stir. She had heard the entire conversation of these wretches; she had not lost a word of their plans, and she still hoped to save the stranger. Only one thought troubled her,—the fear that the three other thieves might return, when all would be lost. Her only resource would be to see the unhappy traveller die, or perish with him.

Christine had scarcely thrown herself upon the bed when a long snore announced that she had fallen asleep. Sister Anne arose softly, left the couch and applied her eye to a hole in the wall by which she could see into the other room.

The stranger was quietly eating his supper. Red Top was trying to entertain him, but at every instant he listened with anxiety for some sound in the forest, and urged the traveller to go immediately to bed. Sister Anne studied the old gentleman at her ease, and the longer she looked at him the more deeply she was interested in him. She felt an attachment for him which was not entirely explained by the singular situation in which they

both were. At every little noise, when the wind blew the branches against the wall, or whirled the dry leaves, the young girl shivered with mortal terror, fearing the return of the three brigands; while, on the contrary, the face of Red Top lighted up with joy, and he ran to the door, hoping to hear his companions approaching.

"Are you expecting someone?" inquired the stranger.

"No, monsieur, — no one; but I am afraid of the thieves, — I have been listening for them all the evening. I begin to think you have escaped their pursuit and you can sleep in peace."

"I will lie down until dawn, when I will ask you to be kind enough to guide me to the next village."

"Yes, monsieur, with great pleasure; but sleep at your ease; dawn is still far away. There is the only bed that I can offer you, but the straw is fresh. I am sorry I cannot offer you something better, but we are so poor."

"Oh, I shall do very well; don't trouble at all about me."

As he spoke the stranger stretched himself upon the straw, where he sought repose, and Red Top remained sitting before the fire, turning his head from time to time to look at the traveller, to see if he had gone to sleep. The young mute, her eye fixed on the opening in the wall, did not lose sight either of the stranger or of the thief,

and she prayed Heaven that Christine might not wake up.

At last the traveller appeared to have fallen asleep, and Red Top rose to take his weapons into the cave, the opening of which was closed by a plank and concealed by a heap of straw. Sister Anne trembled. What if the thief should kill the old man immediately? But no; after he had closed the cave he went softly out of the hut, muttering to himself, —

“Now I’ll go to the usual rendezvous, and if they are not there I’ll come back as quick as I can.”

Red Top opened the door of the hovel quietly and disappeared. The moment for action had arrived; the young mute collected all her courage, and emerged from the chamber, walking with great precaution, so as not to waken Christine, and double-locking the door to prevent her coming out in case she should awake. The flame which played on the hearth was the only light in the chamber where the traveller slept. Sister Anne approached him, took him by the arm and shook him with considerable force. The old man was aroused; he looked with astonishment at the young girl who leaned over him, and whose features expressed the most vivid anxiety. He was about to speak, but she quickly put her finger on his lips and looked about her with terror, her eyes warning him to preserve absolute silence.

The stranger rose and awaited with anxiety the explanation of this mysterious scene.

Sister Anne ran to the cave, succeeded in removing the barrier, and, taking from the hearth a piece of blazing wood, she made signs to the traveller to approach, and showed him the interior of the cave. It contained arms and clothing of every description, and the blood with which this last was spattered showed how it had been gained.

The traveller trembled.

“Good God!” he said; “have I stumbled into the brigands’ retreat?”

The young girl made an affirmative sign, and running to the straw showed him that they intended to assassinate him in his sleep.

The stranger immediately seized a pair of pistols which he found at the entrance of the cave.

“At least,” he said, “I will sell my life dearly; but you, poor woman,—what will you do?”

Sister Anne did not give him time to finish; she ran to open the door of the hut, making him understand that he must hasten to fly, and that she would accompany him. The stranger took her by the hand; they left the hovel. At this moment Christine, who had heard the noise, awakened, and tried to leave her chamber. Finding herself imprisoned, she cried out, called Red Top, ran to the window which looked upon the forest, and saw the stranger and the young girl hastening away.

"Curse it! they are running off!" cried Christine, as she tried to break the bars of the window.

The old gentleman pointed his pistol at her, but Sister Anne stopped him and made him understand that the report of the weapon would attract the thieves. The stranger felt that she was right, and, leaving Christine hurling her curses after them, they ran, and were soon far from the brigands' den.

After having wandered for more than an hour through the forest pathways, trembling at every sound lest they should encounter Red Top and his companions, the fugitives heard the hoofbeats of many horses, which might mean the police sent in search of the brigands. The stranger and the young girl turned in the direction from which the sound came, and presently a man passed them in full flight. It was Red Top, pursued by a horseman, while another man, also mounted, followed, crying out when he saw the stranger, —

"There is my master! Thank Heaven, the scoundrels haven't killed him!"

The traveller pointed out the brigands' retreat to the police, and then, mounting a horse which his servant was leading for him, he took up behind him the young woman who had saved him, and they left the forest at a fast trot.

During the ride the stranger was unceasing in his expressions of gratitude to his liberator, and

she in turn thanked Heaven that she had been saved from the power of the thieves.

The servant told his master that a few minutes after his escape into the forest the police had appeared. The brigands thought only of saving themselves, but at the first attack two of them fell mortally wounded. Then, taking the two horses that the thieves had already unharnessed from the carriage, the servant was mounted on one and led the other for his master, and the guards searched the forest everywhere in an effort to find the lost gentleman.

The peril passed is soon forgotten. They reached a town of considerable size, and the travellers knocked at a farmhouse, where they were hospitably received, and the best care was taken of them. The young mute was especially in need of immediate attention. The frightful situation in which she had been for the last two days, the danger she had escaped, and the courageous exertion she had made during this terrible night,—all these circumstances had weighed heavily upon the unfortunate girl, who was not in a condition to endure so much. They carried her to a good bed. The farm people, learning of the situation in which the young girl was placed, and that she had saved the traveller's life, showed the most tender interest in her; and the stranger would not go to rest until he was assured that everything had been done for his young liberator.

The next day the carriage was brought out for them to resume their journey, since the stranger wished to set forth; but Sister Anne had been seized by a burning fever, and he would not leave until he knew that she was safe. The best physician in the neighborhood was sent for, and the unknown gentleman spent his money freely, so that the young mute might have every attention that her condition demanded; he passed a part of the day in her chamber, and he added his cares to those of the farm people.

Sister Anne realized all the stranger's kindness, and her heart was deeply moved. In spite of the pain from which she suffered, she seized one of the stranger's hands and pressed it with gratitude.

"Poor girl!" said the traveller, much touched. "I will not leave you until I know that you are out of danger. I wished to take you with me in my carriage and carry you to your destination. What can I do for you? I see that you understand me, but you cannot speak. Do you know how to write?"

The young mute made a negative sign, and then all at once a memory seemed to revive in her, and she moved her fingers as if she were tracing characters. The old gentleman gave her a pen and some paper, — she could not use them; he gave her a bit of chalk, and, raising herself in her bed, she leaned over the table placed beside it, and succeeded with great effort in tracing the

name of Frederic, then she pointed to it, while her eyes seemed to say, "That is all I know."

The traveller, surprised when he read the name she had written, looked at her with new interest.

"And your name?" said the stranger. "Do you not know how to write that?"

Sister Anne shook her head and traced again the name of Frederic.

For five days Sister Anne's illness was so severe that her life was in danger, and the stranger would not leave the farm. At the end of that time the physician pronounced her out of danger; but he said that for a long time she would be very delicate, and it would be imprudent for her to leave the farm before she became a mother.

On hearing this, Sister Anne's eyes filled with tears. She was afraid of being a burden to the good people who had received her so kindly, but the stranger did his best to calm and console her.

"I have made provision for everything," he said. "Stay here until you are well again, and, if nothing calls you elsewhere, make your home with the inhabitants of this farm. They love you; you will be happy here."

Sister Anne shook her head sorrowfully, indicating that she wished to go on. The stranger, who had given twenty-five louis to the farm people for their care of the young woman, also put a purse of gold into the hands of his rescuer, who tried to refuse it, and to show her gratitude.

"You owe me nothing, my child," said the old gentleman to her; "remember, you saved my life, and as long as I live I am in debt to you. Here, keep this paper, which contains my name and address, and if you are ever in trouble, don't fail to let me know. You can always count upon my protection."

Sister Anne took the paper and folded it carefully away in the purse the stranger had given her. The old gentleman, looking at her with great tenderness, kissed her forehead, and then hastened away from her expressions of gratitude. He entered his carriage and was driven away, leaving many marks of generosity at the farm.

The stranger was gone, and Sister Anne was very sorrowful. Her heart went out to this unknown, whom she unconsciously united in her memory with Frederic; but the tender friendship she felt for the one did not lessen the love she experienced for the other.

CHAPTER X

THEY ARE MARRIED

FREDERIC had now arrived at that stage of his new love affair when he did not allow a day to pass without his seeing Constance ; since the two young people had mutually confessed their love, the feeling between them seemed constantly to increase. Mademoiselle de Valmont loved with the abandon of a pure and innocent heart which yields to the tender passion for the first time, and which seeks to hide nothing that it feels. She was proud of the love with which she had inspired Frederic, and found all her happiness in reciprocating it.

Frederic, more ardent, more impetuous, yielded to the feeling which led him, but in loving Constance he could not as yet be entirely happy ; he needed to get rid of his thoughts of lonely Sister Anne in her cottage in the wood, which brought self-reproach, to stifle memories which disturbed his happiness. Like those people who never look behind them for fear of seeing something to frighten them, Frederic drove away the half-sweet and half-regretful recollections which carried him back to a still recent epoch. He wished to think

only of Constance, knowing well that henceforth hers must be the only image in his heart. And what was the use of sighing when his sigh would not console her whom he had abandoned? He might say that to himself, but even in his happiest moments there was at the bottom of his soul a voice which reproached him for what he had done. There are some people without conscience who are the only ones who will not understand this.

The Count of Montreville had been gone a fortnight, and, although Frederic did not know the object of his father's journey, he suspected what it might be; but he had no desire to profit by his absence and leave the city himself. Could he have quitted Constance for a single day? Although she had reassured him in regard to the marriage which had roused his anxiety, yet he besought his sweetheart to question her uncle on this subject. Constance hardly dared to speak to the General; but, yielding to Frederic's solicitations, she decided at last to ask him, and one morning went into his study blushing very red.

"Dear uncle, I have heard that you are making plans regarding me," said Constance, dropping her eyes.

The General looked at her smiling, and then tried to be very serious; but such an expression did not fit his countenance.

"Who told you, mademoiselle, that I had made plans about you?"

"Why, uncle, it was Monsieur Frederic, and he said his father had told him."

"Oh, the devil! So Monsieur Frederic interests himself in them? And what are these plans, mademoiselle?"

"Dear uncle, you must know better than I."

"Ah, that's true; you're right. Well, yes; I have some plans."

"Are they for my establishment, dear uncle?" asked Constance, trembling.

"Yes; to marry you, in fact."

"To marry me! Is it possible! Dear uncle, how can you?" and the lovely girl turned to the General her supplicating eyes, full of tears.

"There, there, my dear; don't worry," said the General, taking the hand of his niece; "you are already in the field. As if I wanted to make you unhappy! Don't you want to get married?"

"Well, I didn't say that, uncle."

"Then why all this excitement because I want to find you a husband?"

"But because I want — I don't want —"

"You want, and you don't want! Women will never speak clearly! Hum! Why don't you say right out that you do not wish to marry anyone except Frederic?"

"O uncle! do you know?"

"Anyone would have to be blind not to see that. And how about this fine gentleman, who decides to marry my niece, and who sighs and is

melancholy, and breaks his heart, instead of coming frankly to ask her hand?"

"O dear uncle! do you like it?"

"And haven't I got into a habit of liking what pleases you?"

"But this marriage with the colonel?"

"That's a tale which my old friend invented, I don't know exactly why; but he came and begged me to allow him to tell it. To please him I consented, though I do not comprehend all these mysteries. It seems to me that when young people are in love and confess it, there is no need of marches and countermarches, to get them married. Never mind; Montreville has his tactics, and one can't distract him from them. Don't tell Frederic about it, for his father does not wish him to know; but when the Count returns—and that will be soon—I will put an end to these fictions, and unite you to your lover, who will make himself sick with his sighing."

Constance kissed her uncle and left him, quite radiant with the certainty of her happiness. Presently Frederic returned to her, and inquired anxiously as to what the General had said.

Constance endeavored to conceal her joy. No matter how much a woman loves, she is not unwilling to see her lover disturbed a little, because in the torments he feels she sees new proofs of his love.

"Well," said Frederic with impatience, "you

don't answer me. Is it true that your uncle was thinking of a plan for marrying you? Did you ask him about it?"

"Why, yes; he has been thinking of my marriage."

"Then I was right!" he exclaimed, springing up in a way that made Constance tremble. "He was thinking of it! They told me the truth! But they shall not tear my love from me."

"Dear friend, do not excite yourself."

"You tell me not to excite myself, when they want to marry you to someone else! Constance, if your uncle is a tyrant, I will carry you away! We will fly together to the end of the world, to the end — of the universe! You alone are enough for my happiness! We will go this evening, if you will consent. What, mademoiselle! you are laughing at my despair!"

"O Frederic! how hot-headed you are!"

"Ah, mademoiselle wishes to give me some lessons in wisdom. It seems to me the idea of this marriage does not afflict you very much. Is that how you love me?"

"You horrid thing! what a reproach! But, my friend, do not think, because my love is quieter than yours, that it is not just as strong."

"But what about your uncle's plan?"

"And suppose it was to you, monsieur, that he thought of marrying me?"

"To me!"

Frederic's features were instantly lighted by a new expression, and Constance put her finger on his lips, saying, "Hush! silence, dear friend! My uncle told me not to speak of it to you; but lately, you see, I cannot help—"

"What, Constance! Do you mean it? Oh, what joy! Your uncle is the best of men; oh, let me go and throw myself at his feet!"

"No, no, truly! Because he'll scold me. I shall never be able to make you reasonable. Sit down here, monsieur, beside me."

"Well, then, when can I tell him that I love you?"

"When your father returns—it will not be long. Do you know where he has gone?"

"Why, no, I don't think so; I am not certain."

"Now, see, dear friend, you look sad again."

"Me? No, I'm not! I swear it!"

"When we were not certain of our happiness, I could pardon you these dreamy airs and the moments of sorrow which seize you so often when you are near me; but realize, monsieur, that I don't like these moods at all. My dear, you have sorrows, secret anxieties, that you do not confide to Constance. Is it not so?"

"No, no; not at all!"

"Promise me that you will tell me all, absolutely all; that I shall have your entire confidence. Don't you think that when two people

are engaged they ought to tell each other everything?"

"Oh, yes, dear Constance, I promise you I will tell you all my thoughts."

Frederic prevaricated somewhat, but the fib was excusable, for at the time a complete confession would not have given great pleasure to Constance, who was convinced that her lover thought of no one but herself, and who, in spite of her gentleness, her sweetness and confidence, was too desperately in love with Frederic not to be susceptible to jealousy, a sentiment which is almost always a part of love with women.

The Count of Montreville returned to Paris after an absence of nearly a month. Under any other circumstances Frederic would have been surprised at the length of this journey, which might easily have been finished in two weeks; but he was so much occupied with Constance that he paid little attention to what went on around him. Nevertheless, at seeing his father again, memories of Dauphiny rose in his mind, and he was embarrassed as he stood before him, not daring to question him.

On the other hand, a change appeared to have taken place in the Count, who was deeply preoccupied with some recent event, and was often thoughtful and sad, looking at his son as if he both desired and feared an explanation. At last Frederic ventured first to open the subject with

his father, and, greatly to his surprise, the Count's manner did not change; he did not assume the cold and severe air which had been usual with him whenever Dauphiny was mentioned.

"You have been in Dauphiny," said Frederic. "Did you go to Vizille?"

"Yes," said the Count; "I have been through the whole neighborhood — the wood in which you spent so long a time —"

"And did you see that — that young girl?"

"No, I did not see her. Some days before I reached there she had left her cottage, and an old herdsman lived in the place."

"What! Sister Anne was not in her cottage? And Marguerite?"

"The old woman had been dead for several months."

"Sister Anne has gone away! Poor little thing! What will become of her? With her affliction how can she get on, how can she make herself understood? Ah, the unfortunate child!"

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed the Count, fixing his eyes upon his son, an expression of the most lively interest in them. "What is the matter with this girl? Why is she so much to be pitied? Answer me, Frederic!"

"Father, Sister Anne has not been able to speak since she was seven years old. A frightful event, a terrible shock, deprived her of the power of speech."

"Great God!" cried the Count, vividly struck by what he had heard. "It was she. I divined it."

Frederic did not hear his father's last words, absorbed as he was in thought of Sister Anne. He saw her wandering helpless and unsheltered through trackless forests and open fields, driven from the inns, and everywhere a prey to misery and unhappiness. He realized that this was his fault, that if he had not endeavored to inspire in this young girl a violent passion she would have lived peacefully in the depth of her wood, not desiring pleasures she did not know, and not longing for the happiness of a different existence. At this moment remorse overwhelmed Frederic, and he reproached himself sharply for his conduct toward a woman whom he had ceased to love, but who would always be dear to him.

For a long time the Count and his son were plunged in their reflections. The Count at last broke the silence, his voice trembling a little as he spoke to Frederic.

"Don't worry about the fate of this young girl; I found her."

"You found her, father? How is that possible?"

"Yes, at a farm in the neighborhood of Grenoble. I left her there, and I have made a sort of arrangement with the people so that she will be taken care of."

"But how did it happen? You could not recognize her."

“ Well, her misfortune, her youth. I became greatly interested in her ; something told me she was the person I was looking for, and now I know it, since you tell me she is a mute. I repeat, don't worry about her future. I left her with kind people, who love her, and she will be happy with them. Besides, I shall take care to watch over her fate.”

The Count purposely did not tell his son of his adventure in the forest, and of all that Sister Anne had done for him, having a fear that if Frederic heard the story of how the young girl had saved his father's life, his love for her might revive in all its pristine strength. He did not wish the young man to suspect that the mute was about to become a mother ; that might disarrange all his plans.

The Count had become deeply interested in Sister Anne, and he promised himself to look after her future and to take care of her child. He was, however, not less determined to accomplish the marriage between his son and the niece of his old friend, and to do this he considered it very necessary to conceal everything in regard to the poor orphan. On his arrival at Paris he had expressly forbidden his servant to mention his adventure in the forest and the young woman they had left at the farm.

Frederic was restored to happiness by the assurance his father gave him that Sister Anne was with

kind people, and that in future she would be provided for. In love affairs, remorse does not last long, and the new sentiment is always there to drive away the old. With Constance, the young man was able to forget entirely the poor forest maiden, and in making new vows of love those he had sworn to another passed from his memory.

The marriage of the two young people could not be long delayed after the return of the Count of Montreville. Frederic desired it, Constance hoped for it, and the General wished it, because he did not think it best to let young lovers sigh too long.

Every one was agreed; what could delay the happiness of the lovers? The marriage day was chosen. The General decided to give a ball on the marriage of his niece, although he had never danced in his life. The Count wished to salute Constance by the sweet name of daughter as soon as possible, and the lovers, — ah! we know what they wished. It is not necessary to mention it.

Frederic was so much occupied with his approaching happiness that he was very seldom troubled with those memories which gave his features an expression of melancholy. If by chance a sigh escaped him, one glance from Constance dissipated immediately his memories of other days. Mademoiselle de Valmont was so lovable and the approach of happiness made her so beautiful that it was impossible not to adore her.

At last the day came which was to unite Frederic and Constance, and the Count of Montreville was so delighted that he allowed his son to invite anyone he pleased to his wedding. Frederic had no better friend than Dubourg, who, in spite of his follies, had given him proofs of a real attachment ; besides which, since Dubourg had inherited a fortune he had become much more sensible. Of course he was always poor by the middle of the month, but he had not hypothecated his income, and he had replaced écarté for dominoes, a game on which much less money was lost.

Ménard was not forgotten ; the good man loved Frederic tenderly, and although he had been a little too indulgent during their travels, the Count had pardoned all that, and, moreover, the tutor had always had the best intentions. As to his penchant for eating, in society this was often regarded as a merit.

Constance was dressed with taste and elegance, but her toilet was forgotten on seeing her grace and beauty, for happiness embellishes everything and can even add to the charms of a pretty face. The men could only admire her, but the women could see at a glance every detail of her costume and could tell you how every pin was placed, and how many folds there were, both in the back and front of her dress. Man's perception could never be so accurate as that.

Frederic was radiant with love ; he did not let

Constance out of his sight, which was the surest way of avoiding unpleasant memories. Frederic also was very handsome, his face noble and calm, and if the men admired Constance, there were plenty of women who would have liked to marry Frederic.

The General and the Count felt the most lively satisfaction in marrying their children. Monsieur de Valmont was more gay and expansive than the Count of Montreville, but the Count smiled on everybody, and for the first time embraced his son tenderly. Monsieur Ménard was dressed with great care, and he maintained a very severe manner until dinner was announced. As to Dubourg, he was delighted to be at his friend's wedding, and, wishing above all things to work himself into the good graces of the Count, he spent the day in trying to acquire a manner so severe that he looked as if he had a fit of the spleen, and bore himself with such dignity that one would have thought him a man of sixty years. Every time he saw the Count near him he began to talk of the deceitful pleasures of the world, of the happiness of retirement, and of the joys which await the just after death. This became so marked that the General said to Frederic, —

“What a devil of a fellow that Dubourg is! Does he pass all his time in cemeteries? I went up to him once or twice to gossip a bit, and he quoted five or six passages from Young's ‘Night

Thoughts,' and from the 'Petit Carême' sermons of Massillon. That's a gay young man to invite to a wedding."

Frederic approached Dubourg and tried to persuade him to resume his usual manner, but Dubourg was convinced that his conversation and his air and manner just suited Monsieur de Montreville, and he would not make the least alteration.

A magnificent dinner was served in the Count's hotel, where the young people were to spend the evening, and then return to the General's house, where they were to live. The General travelled a great deal, and, having need of only a small suite of rooms, he gave up to the newly married people three-quarters of his mansion. Marriages in the best society are not so gay as middle-class weddings, an advantage which the middle class gains by not being admitted into the best society. But a sweet gayety presided over this dinner table. Monsieur Ménard ate as if he were at the table of M. Chambertin, but Dubourg did not eat at all. He refused almost every dish because he took it for granted that this was much more in good form. It was impossible to make him accept a glass of champagne or of liqueur. "I will take nothing," he replied with imperturbable composure.

The Count of Montreville looked at him with astonishment, while Ménard, who sat next him, said to him frequently, —

"But take something; I've seen you drink

often enough. Why don't you say at once that you are ill?"

"Your friend is terribly abstemious," said the General to Frederic. "You have invited an anchorite to meet us."

After the dinner, dancing occupied the evening. The newly married couple gave themselves up to this pleasure, always a delightful pastime, and surely the most charming way to end a wedding.

But Dubourg did not dance; he contented himself with walking through the salons in the stiffest possible manner, holding his head as if he had a ramrod down his back, and not pausing once before an *écarté* table.

"Don't you play, Monsieur Dubourg?" said the Count to him with a laughing air.

"No, monsieur; I have entirely given up playing for money. I love nothing but chess, the game for reasonable people, one of whom I have become."

"And you don't dance?"

"Never. I am fond of nothing but the minuet. That is a noble and stately dance, and it is a great pity that it is not danced nowadays."

"The devil, Monsieur Dubourg! You are much changed. You were formerly rather a giddy fellow."

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte; other times, other manners. We grow wise as we grow old."

"Old! But it is only a year ago that you played

Hippolyte, and induced that poor Ménard to play Theseus."

"Oh, monsieur, but since that time a great revolution has taken place in me. I love only study, science; ah, science especially; for, as Cato says, '*Sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago.*'"

The Count, smiling, left Dubourg, who was satisfied that he had pleased him exceedingly. The day was ended; Ménard had returned to his little room, recalling in his memory all the delicate morsels that he had eaten. Dubourg was no sooner out of the hotel than he leaped and ran like a scholar who is just freed from the eyes of his master. Frederic and Constance were happy. They were alone at last, and no witnesses were present to constrain the expression of their tenderness. Society is wearisome to lovers, and they look forward with impatience to mystery and solitude. At last Frederic could lead his wife away. On the first day of his marriage a husband is a lover who carries off his mistress.

CHAPTER XI

SISTER ANNE BECOMES A MOTHER. A LONG SOJOURN AT THE FARM

SISTER ANNE continued to dwell with the kind people at the farmhouse in which the Count had placed her, for we know now that the strange gentleman whose life she had so providentially saved by disclosing to him the danger to which he was exposed in the robber's cottage, was no other than Frederic's father, who was returning from a fruitless visit to Vizille, where he had been to inquire into the circumstances and condition of the hapless girl whom Frederic — constrained by the Count's orders and his own habit of obedience — had abandoned against his will. The count had found no one in the cottage or in the wood, but the old shepherd, and the latter was entirely ignorant of the direction in which Sister Anne had turned her steps when she had deserted her cottage. In answer to all questions that were put to him, regarding the owner of the dwelling, he only said, —

“She has gone away, that's all I know. She wanted to go, and she went ; and I don't know where she has gone.”

On leaving the wood the Count had traversed all the neighborhood of Grenoble, and was returning from Lyons when his carriage was attacked in the forest.

In spite of her desire to continue her journey, Sister Anne knew very well that she was in no condition to travel; the time approached when she would become a mother, when she would hold in her arms the fruit of her love. This thought softened her torments a little; the hope of seeing her child made her forget her anguish, and in the farmhouse every one tried to comfort her and to bring a smile to her lips. The inhabitants of this dwelling were good people who felt the deepest interest in the young mute. Even without recompense they would have shown her the same attachment; but money is always a help, and the sum which the Count of Montreville gave them, when he asked them to take care of Sister Anne, was very considerable.

The young woman felt that she would do well to prolong her stay with these good people, and she offered them the purse of gold which the old gentleman had left with her a few moments before his departure, but the villagers would accept nothing more.

"Keep this money," said the farmer's wife to her. "Keep it, my child. This gentleman whom you saved from the brigands has provided for everything; he has paid us very well indeed. We

did not need that to make us wish to be kind to you, you are so sweet, so gentle, and so unhappy. Poor little thing! I can imagine in part your misfortune; some betrayer has taken advantage of your inexperience and your innocence,—he has deceived you and then left you. That is the history of all young girls who have no parents to warn them against the enticements of these fine gentlemen. Don't cry, my child; I'm not condemning you; you are less guilty than any other; your betrayer is the one who ought to be punished. To leave you in your afflicted state! Oh, he must have had a very hard heart."

When she heard these words Sister Anne made a quick movement to prevent the farmer's wife from saying any more. She put her finger on her lips, and shook her head positively, to deny what the villager had said.

"Never mind," said the farmer's wife; "she doesn't want us to say anything unkind of him; she loves him still. Well, that's the way with women; they are always ready to excuse the one who has done them the most harm. But don't worry about yourself, my child; stay with us, and we will cherish you like our own daughter; we will take very good care of you; here you will always be protected from misfortune."

Sister Anne pressed tenderly the hand of the farmer's wife, but her eyes would not make a promise which her heart had no intention of

keeping. Frederic still reigned in the depths of her burning heart, and the hope of finding him again never left the young girl.

A short time after the stranger's departure Sister Anne recalled that he had given her a paper. She took it from the purse in which she had put it, and showed it to the farmer's wife, impatient to know what it meant. The villager read, "The Count of Montreville, Rue de Provence, Paris." The paper contained nothing else. Sister Anne did not suspect that this was the name of Frederic's father, for he had never told her his family name; but she heard with joy that he lived in Paris. She tried to make her friend understand that this was the city to which she wanted to go, and she carefully replaced the paper in her purse.

"It is the stranger's address," said the farmer's wife. "Oh, he was a very unusual man. He is grateful; he will not forget the service that you have done him; I am sure that if you go to Paris he will receive you kindly; but what can you do in that great city? Believe me, dear girl, it is better to stay with us; you will be much happier."

Sister Anne was delighted to have this paper, upon which was the name of the city where she intended to go some day; with this little note she could make herself understood, and she gave thanks to Heaven for the circumstance which would enable her to find that Paris in which she hoped to discover her lover.

After she had been two months at the farm, Sister Anne brought into the world a little son. She looked at her child with a sort of intoxication ; she was transported when she heard his first cries. Only a mother could understand the delight which this moment gave her. From the very first she believed that she could see a resemblance to Frederic in her little boy. She could not keep her eyes from him ; she covered him with kisses ; her little one should not leave her, and in spite of her feebleness she was determined to nurse him herself. The villagers did not oppose her wish, for there is no joy to a mother like that of nursing her own child, a constantly recurring delight, which Sister Anne seemed to feel even more deeply than others. She was so happy, so proud, when she held her infant to her breast, that joy made her forget her sorrows. Frederic did not fade from her memory, but her soul was no longer a prey to melancholy. The sight of her child often brought a smile to her lips ; she felt that a mother could endure anything for her son.

Some weeks after her confinement Sister Anne declared that she wished to begin her travels, but the farm people warmly opposed her plan.

“What are you thinking of?” said the farmer’s wife. “How can you travel when you are nursing your baby? It is no longer possible for you to think of yourself alone, but you must consider to what danger you are exposing his life. Believe

me, when you encounter new fatigues and perils, it can't but affect the nourishment that you give your child, and he draws his life from your breast. No, madame ; it is impossible ; your infant would soon lose his health and his life, if you persist in your plan."

Should she endanger the life of her son ? This idea made the young mute tremble. She was willing to make any sacrifice for her little one, and although to delay her journey was a very great disappointment, after what the farmer's wife had said to her, she decided immediately to remain at the farm until her baby was weaned, when he would no longer suffer from the troubles and anxieties of his mother.

"Good, good ; you will remain then," said the farmer's wife. She read in Sister Anne's eyes that she yielded.

"This is very well, my child ; you are doing right. In a year, or in eighteen months, your son will be strong enough ; then we will see ; but until then you must not think of travelling."

Sister Anne had made her decision, and, though she still thought of Frederic, she busied herself entirely with her child. As a reward for her cares, she saw him each day gain new strength. His cheeks were brilliant with health ; his lips were always parted with a sweet smile, and even now his little arms seemed to surround with special delight the neck of her who had given him life.

Sister Anne had written the name of Frederic for the villagers, to show them that she wished her little boy to be given this name, and they already called the child nothing else, the young mother experiencing a new pleasure each time that this name struck her ear. How happy she would be when her little child recognized it and responded to it!

The young mute had been with the good farm people for six months, when one day a courier brought to the farm a package containing twenty-five louis, and a note from the Count of Montreville addressed to the farmer's wife. In his letter he asked them again to take special care of the young woman, and promised that if they did so he would send them an equal sum every six months.

The farmer's wife hastened to tell Sister Anne of this new kindness of the Count of Montreville, and the eyes of the young mother overflowed with tears of gratitude.

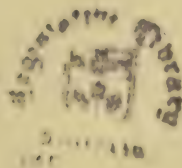
"What a good man he is!" said the villager. "Oh, I was sure he would not forget you. I repeat to you, if you go to Paris later on the Count will take every care of you. Gracious, child, he is a count, and that means a nobleman, a rich and powerful man. He must be very rich, and if your betrayer is in Paris he will look him up, I am sure; and perhaps, with his influence and good advice, he will make him stay with you."

Sister Anne showed that she agreed with the farmer's wife, and that she would follow her advice, and insisted that the good woman should accept the money which the Count had sent, feeling very happy to think that these good people had lost nothing by their kindness to her.

The time rolled on. Sister Anne idolized her son. He filled the place of all that she had lost. She saw in him the brother whom she had loved so dearly, and whose death had caused her such a fearful shock. She saw Frederic in him, for the child bore a great resemblance to his father. She studied the slightest wishes of her child; she watched his look, his smile; and in those touching cares prompted by her mother-love, which occupied her days and nights, the time did not seem too long until she could begin that journey in which she should find her lover again, and perhaps be reunited to him forever.

Little Frederic promised to have the beauty and sweetness of his mother. Already he could lisp her name,—the name so sweet to a mother's ear; and Sister Anne felt how necessary it was that she should not deprive her child of the comfort and care which every one lavished upon him in the farmhouse. If her child had known only her, he would not have been able to speak, for the use of the voice in speech is an art which one cannot gain without a master.

The Count sent a second sum of money at the



time promised. His messenger asked carefully as to the condition of the young mute and the health of the baby, and advised Sister Anne not to leave the farm, where she enjoyed a tranquil and happy life, and where she could take the best of care of her son.

But Sister Anne could not give up her desire to go to Paris. In spite of the remonstrances of the farmer's wife, she still wished to try to find Frederic. The love she felt for her son did not diminish her regret at being separated from her lover; on the contrary, when she looked at her boy and admired his beauty, she felt the keenest longing to show him to his father. If he should see him, she thought, could he help loving him? "No, he would never afterward consent to be separated from me."

Little Frederic was twenty months old, and had been weaned for some time. He began to take his first steps, and each day his walk was less wavering. Sister Anne guided him, supported him, watched the development of his strength and of his faculties. A mother sees each day with delight the changes in her child, just as a gardener watches the growth, even in a single night, of the plants that are committed to his care.

She had no reason to be anxious for the health of her son, and the money which the Count had given her relieved her anxiety as to the expense of her journey. Not doubting that as soon as

she arrived in Paris she would find in the Count a protector and friend, Sister Anne resolved to undertake her journey, and one morning showed the farmer's wife the paper bearing the Count's address, which was her way of announcing that she wished to go.

The farm people did their best to persuade her to change her resolution, but this time Sister Anne was immovable. She had determined to go,—she must go to Paris. Her heart told her that she would find Frederic there.

"Why do you take your child?" said the farmer's wife to her. "Leave him with us; you know how much we love him."

Sister Anne, who could not understand how a mother could be separated from her child a single moment, pressed the boy against her breast, and signed that she would never leave him.

"Well, anyway," said the farmer's wife, "if you are determined to go to Paris, you shall not go on foot like a beggar. I will take you to Lyons in my chaise, then I will put you in a diligence, which will take you and your child to your destination. When you arrive there, all you need to do is to show the address that you have, and they will take you to the house of M. de Montreville, who will not abandon you, and when you wish to return to us he will provide you with the means."

Sister Anne showed the good farmer's wife all the gratitude that her kindness would naturally

call forth. The journey was decided upon, and they were all busy with the necessary preparations, her friends providing the young woman with underwear, clothing, and everything that she needed for herself and her child. They offered her money also, but Sister Anne's purse contained fifty louis, which seemed an enormous sum, and much more than enough to live on in Paris, even if the Count of Montreville did not provide for her there. She wished nothing more, her clothes being to her magnificent in comparison with those she had worn in the wood. Her heart swelled with joy when she looked at her simple and tasteful dress, which was that of a young farmer's wife of Dauphiny. "He will find me very beautiful," she said, "and I am sure he will love me more than ever."

The preparations were finished at last. Her kind friend harnessed the horse to the chaise, and got in with Sister Anne, who held her little boy upon her knees. They started at dawn, arriving at Lyons the same evening. The farmer's wife secured a place for the young mother in a diligence which started the next morning for Paris, putting her in charge of the guard, so that he would watch over her during the journey.

The moment for departure arrived. Many tears were shed when the good woman said farewell to the young mute and to little Frederic.

"You wanted to leave us, my child," she said

to Sister Anne; "I'm afraid you have done wrong. You are going to an immense city; the people will not be so kind as they are in our village, but don't forget us. Let us hear news of you through Monsieur de Montreville, who seems to love you greatly; but if some day you are unhappy, ah! come back quickly to us, dear child; we shall always be glad to see you and your baby."

Sister Anne embraced the kind woman tenderly, and then with her little boy entered the vehicle which was to take her to Paris.

CHAPTER XII

THE DILIGENCE. SISTER ANNE IN PARIS

A YOUNG woman who up to the age of sixteen has never left her cottage home, and by reason of her peculiar affliction is a stranger to the world and its usages must necessarily experience a thousand new sensations — whether pleasurable or otherwise — when she sees herself for the first time surrounded by strange people in one of those caravans in which travellers make the journey between city and country.

Such was Sister Anne's situation. She was barely eighteen and a half years of age when she left the farmhouse to venture to Paris with her little son, who was then a year and nine months old. Seated in the back of the carriage and holding her baby on her knees, she dared not raise her eyes to all these unknown persons who were travelling with her, and blushed vividly whenever she perceived that any of them were looking at her.

Her extreme youth, her beauty and modesty, and the sweet motherly affection which she manifested for her charming little son were more than sufficient to render her interesting in the eyes

of every person of refinement; but you do not find much refinement in a diligence, and the people who surrounded Sister Anne seemed especially lacking in it. At her left was a merchant who talked constantly of his business with a broker sitting opposite him. The ups and downs of the board of trade, the price of sugar, of coffee, and of cochineal, the business at the recent fairs, so occupied these gentlemen that they did not have time to ask their neighbors' pardon when they thrust their elbows into them by mistake, or stuck their snuffboxes under the wrong nose. At the right of the young mother was a man about forty years of age. He had a pair of furtive eyes which never looked you straight in the face. His manner was dry and cold; he spoke little, but seemed to be watching and studying his neighbors. Opposite her was a lady of fifty years. She wore a soiled silk dress and a very old velvet hat, and upon this waved some plumes which bore a great resemblance to sticks. Her face was inflamed and overloaded with rouge, with patches and with snuff. Before the carriage had been going ten minutes, this lady had told the passengers that she had played the ingénues at Strasbourg, the princesses at Caen, the young lovers at Saint-Malo, the shepherdesses at Quimper, the queens at Nantes, noble mothers at Noisy-le-Sec, and the first ladies at Troyes. She intended to play the great coquettes at the Fun-

ambules in Paris, where she counted on shortly obtaining an *ordre de début* for the Comédie-Française, an honor she had been soliciting for thirty-six years.

Finally, next the *débutante* was a fat gentleman who slept almost constantly, only wakening to cry out, "Halloo! we're going to fall. I thought we were tipping over." He was a delightful neighbor to have in a diligence!

During the first moments of the journey, Sister Anne heard nothing but a confused noise, mingled with words which she could not comprehend. The indigo and the cochineal of the merchants were not to be distinguished from the adventures of the great coquette, and the actress constantly cried to her sleepy neighbor, —

"Take care, monsieur; you'll throw yourself upon me. Have a little regard for my sex."

"Oh, yes; I thought we were falling," said the fat gentleman again, rubbing his eyes.

Everyone attended to his own comfort first, and then began to study his neighbors. The gentleman with the bad eyes began by complimenting Anne on the beauty of her son, and this called a sweet smile to the face of the young mute, for you are sure to please a mother when you praise her child.

The lady with the old hat studied Sister Anne in her turn, and said, "She really does very well, this little lady; she has an interesting face; that's

exactly the costume I wore in 'Annette et Lubin,' in 1792. It was very becoming to me. I must play this rôle again at the Funambules."

The two merchants glanced at Sister Anne, and as the little Frederic had a bit of sugar in his hands this suggested necessarily the latest variations in the sugar market.

"The child is very pretty," said the actress. "He already has a great deal of expression in his features. If he was mine I would put him on the stage; in a year he could play the little Joas in 'Athalie,' and in two more he would have great success in Punchinello. Oh, that's the way they educate children nowadays. That is superb. Nobody could resist such an education; and at twelve he could be playing Forioso."

Sister Anne had never heard of Forioso and the little Joas, but she saw that her baby was admired, and her heart swelled with that sentiment of pleasure and pride so natural in a young mother. Presently, however, she realized that questions were addressed to her.

"You are going to Paris," said the actress. "Are you taking him to be vaccinated, or have you already had it done at home? What are you going to do in Paris? Has your husband gone on in advance?"

The lady, receiving no answer to all these questions, began to think the conduct of the young mother very insolent.

"Can't you hear me, madame?" she went on again, in an ironical tone. "When I talk to you it seems as if you might do me the honor to answer me."

Sister Anne shook her head and lowered her eyes sorrowfully.

"Well, what do you mean by that?" cried the old *débutante*. "I believe she dares to say that she doesn't want to talk to me. Please understand, little upstart, that it is an honor to talk to me, and that Primrose Bérénice de Follencourt is not one to endure an insult. I've had a fight more than once on the stage. I've played a man's rôles, and I've drawn the sword. Do you understand, Miss Impertinence?"

Sister Anne was frightened at the old lady's tone, and at the wrath which sparkled in her eyes. She glanced supplicatingly at her neighbor on the right; he had been watching her with much curiosity, and he said to the actress, —

"Madame, I think you are wrong to be angry."

"I should like to know how I can be wrong?"

"The silence of this young woman is undoubtedly not natural. I have not heard her speak a single word since we entered the carriage, not even to her baby. I believe that she is a mute."

"A mute! A dumb woman! That is impossible, monsieur."

But Sister Anne hastened to indicate that this was true, and immediately the old actress uttered

a cry of astonishment so loud that it wakened her fat neighbor.

"She is mute? Is it possible, monsieur? Do you understand she is mute?"

"Oh! oh!" cried the sleepy neighbor. "I thought we were tipping over."

"Oh, you are a perfectly unendurable man! You will give me hysterics with your continual upsets. — Poor angel! dear little thing! You are a mute, my sweet friend? Oh, how sorry I am for you! How you must suffer! I would rather be blind or deaf. Poor little thing! She's so interesting, such grace; and she can't talk. And how long since this happened, dear child?"

Sister Anne was as much astonished at the friendship which the old comedian showed as she had been at her anger. She drew her purse from her bosom, took from it the paper which she always carried in it, and showed it to her neighbor, who read it in a low voice and contented himself by saying, —

"It is the address of the house where she is going."

"Oh, I suppose she's going to be a nurse in this place. She'd do much better if she played in pantomime. What a pretty head! She would do beautifully in '*Philomèle et Térée*.'"

Sister Anne's neighbor made no response to the old actress. He seemed greatly preoccupied since his glimpse of the purse of gold which the

young mother had drawn from her bosom, to get the address of the Count. From this moment he redoubled his attentions and cares for Sister Anne. He caressed the little Frederic, and carried his gallantry so far as to buy him a piece of barley sugar and some spice cakes at the first station. Sister Anne, whose pure and simple heart saw only friends and protectors in every one, did not notice the dishonesty and falseness which were evident in the glance of her neighbor. On the contrary, she felt every confidence in him. Poor little thing! What will become of you in Paris?

The second day of the journey, the gentleman with the sly glance said to Sister Anne, "I am very well acquainted in Paris with the Count of Montreville, and go often to see him. He is one of my friends. If you wish it I will take you to him myself."

The young mute nodded gladly, to indicate that she accepted this offer with gratitude; and the old actress, noticing that Sister Anne smiled at her neighbor, compressed her lips and looked at her with a disdainful air; then she murmured between her teeth, "Those are pretty manners! To make acquaintances in a travelling carriage!" There are some people who are always looking for evil, especially when they have done wicked things all their lives. As to Sister Anne, she gazed at the comedian with astonishment. She could not understand how a woman, in less than twenty-

four hours, could feel for her anger, friendship and disdain.

At last the diligence entered the great city. Sister Anne was astonished and terrified at all she saw, and believed herself in a new world. She had reached Lyons in the evening, and had left it in the early morning, so she had not seen that city, of which the grandeur, the wealth and the population would have prepared her somewhat for Paris.

The gentleman with the sly glance did not lessen his tender care for the young mute and her son; he helped them out of the diligence. The great coquette of the Funambules rearranged her hat, for the plumes had become a little crumpled in the carriage. The two merchants ran to the board of trade, and the fat gentleman went off, saying, "Good! we didn't upset. That's queer; I thought we were going to upset every minute." While all this was going on, the obliging gentleman called a cab, and, having placed Sister Anne in it with her bundle, he seated himself beside her.

The unknown spoke to the coachman. He said to the young traveller, "We will stop first at the house of the Count of Montreville. I am enchanted to take you myself to his mansion. You are a stranger in Paris, and you would have been very much embarrassed, because you cannot speak."

Sister Anne thanked the gentleman. The poor

little thing never dreamed that she had fallen into the hands of a confidence man, of a wretched criminal, who had played his tricks in most of the larger cities, and had been forced to flee from them, and who came to Paris, hoping that an absence of eight years had enabled his old victims to forget him, and that he would find plenty of new ones. It was impossible that the young mute should not fall into the first snare that was laid for her; sweet and confiding, and a stranger to deceit, she looked for evil in no one. Her adventure in the forest had taught her to be afraid of thieves in a wood, but she never dreamed of suspecting those whom she would encounter in the city, whom it is much more difficult to recognize, because they are always covered with a mask of honesty. This makes them more dangerous than those who attack us on the open road. The cab in which the travellers were riding stopped before a beautiful residence. The gentleman hastened to descend, and said to Sister Anne, "Wait for me a moment. This is the Count's house, but I will see if he is there now." Presently he entered the house, but he returned in a few minutes looking somewhat annoyed.

"My dear lady, I was afraid of the very thing that has happened. The Count of Montreville is in the country. He will not return for two days."

The young girl's face seemed to say, "What

shall I do during that time? Where shall I go?" "Don't be anxious," continued this very obliging young man; "I don't wish to leave you in embarrassment; I'm going to take you to an honest house, where they will look after you. Two days are soon past, and then you can return to the Count's house."

Sister Anne again expressed her gratitude, touched by all this kindness, although she was not surprised at it; she believed that every one was kind in the great cities. The cab went on. The movement of the carriage pleased little Frederic; he laughed, he jumped upon his mother's knees, and she herself was astonished and delighted as she looked out at the stately houses, at the shops, and at all this crowd of people. "Oh, you will see much more than this," said the gentleman. "You will be surprised in a thousand different ways; this journey will teach you a great deal."

The cab stopped before a shabby-looking private hotel in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques. Sister Anne entered it and discovered that if it were an honest place it was a very unattractive and dirty one; but she followed the gentleman, who carried her bundle into a chamber which had been assigned to her, and who stopped to say to Sister Anne alone, —

"Before leaving you, I must tell you that there is a little formality to fulfil; when you take a

room in a hotel in Paris, you are obliged to tell what money you have with you. The police ask this information, so that if anyone loses money in the city it will be more easily found. If you declare today that you have forty louis, and tomorrow it is stolen from you, they count the purses of all the people in the city, and he who has too much is the thief. Ho! what do you think of that? That's pretty clever — isn't it?"

Sister Anne did not understand all that the gentleman meant; she looked at him for a clearer explanation, and he added, "You must count your money for the mistress of the house. Will you do it, or shall I do it for you? That would be better. Give me your purse, and the trouble will soon be over."

The poor little girl drew her purse from her bosom, and the obliging gentleman took it. He said, "Don't be impatient. I'll go and count what is in here." Then he went out. He gave a piece of gold to the mistress of the house, saying to her, "That is to pay the expenses of this young woman, who is a mute." After that the scoundrel hurried away, flattering himself that he had shown great finesse, and went to the Palais-Royal, where, finding other scoundrels of his own kind, he soon lost what he had stolen from the unfortunate mute. While looking for more dupes whose purses he could take, he filched one from the pocket of a wealthy Englishman; but this

milord, having seen him, had the rascal arrested. He was taken to the Préfecture, then to the Bicêtre, and at last to the galleys, where he even tried to steal from his comrades;—but we will leave him there.

Sister Anne waited in vain for the return of the kind gentleman who had gone out with her purse. The poor little thing had no suspicion. She was not at all uneasy, and played quietly with her little boy, occasionally looking out of the window, and then turning away terrified, because the chamber was on the third floor, and the young mute had never found herself so high above the passers-by.

However, the gentleman did not return, and Sister Anne was beginning to feel surprised at his long absence, when the mistress of the house came in search of her.

The young mother extended her hand to take the purse, but the landlady merely asked her what she would have. "I shall take great care of you," she added, "for the gentleman paid for your lodging and all expenses before he went away; he said you would stay two days with me, and that I should give you all you needed."

The gentleman had gone away. A frightful presentiment suddenly illuminated the mind of Sister Anne. She tried to make herself understood; she held out her hand and made signs as if she were counting money, but the landlady did not comprehend. "I tell you that I have been paid," she

declared. "I ask nothing from you, my child, and I came to tell you dinner is ready."

Sister Anne was completely overcome. It was not only her money that she regretted, but in her purse was the address of the Count of Montreville, and the miserable wretch had carried away that with all that she possessed. What would become of her? How should she now be able to find the house of her protector?

During the day the young girl still preserved some hope. She tried to think that the unknown would return, but night fell and the obliging man had not reappeared. Sister Anne shed bitter tears as she pressed her son to her heart. She no longer could suffer alone, and this knowledge made her pain all the more keen. Already she saw her child deprived of the necessities of life; she saw him in need of food; she trembled; she realized all the horror of her situation, and she repented deeply that she had left the farm, for the thought of her child's suffering deprived her of all her courage.

She passed in her room the second day of her stay in Paris. The wretch who had despoiled her had told her that the Count would be away two days; so she waited until the next day to look for M. de Montreville. She hoped that she might recognize the house before which the cab had stopped. The poor little thing believed that she could find it a second time in this immense city. She did not suspect that the scoundrel who had

stolen her purse had stopped the carriage before a hotel which was not that of the Count.

The next day she took her son upon one arm and the package containing her effects on the other, and so left the house, the landlady making no effort to keep her, because her expenses had only been paid for two days. Sister Anne put herself in the hands of Providence, and tried to recall her courage, as she wandered through the streets of the strange city, where she was unknown. Every instant the carriages terrified her, the horses filled her with fear, the cries of the street hucksters deafened her. The sight of this mass of people coming and going, and pushing rudely against her, troubled her so that she almost lost consciousness. The poor little thing sat down under a gateway and began to cry. The portress of the house asked her the cause of her sorrow, but she could only cry the harder; then the portress went away in a bad humor, saying, "There is no use in pitying people who will not tell you what is the matter with them."

After the young girl had wept for a long time, she set out again on her way; but she walked for four hours without accomplishing anything; she saw still streets and shops, and not knowing which way to take often went for a long distance, only to come back again to the place whence she had started. And how should she recognize the Count's house? She realized that it would be im-

possible for her to identify it. Soon she began to have wants which increased the horror of the situation.

She seated herself upon a stone bench. People passing by threw her a glance, but continued on their way; they would have stopped if, instead of a woman weeping over her child, they had seen a cat fighting with punchinello.

Fortunately, it was in the middle of summer, and the coming of night did not prevent her from wandering farther. The young mute entered a pastrycook's shop and gave her child some cakes; then she sadly offered one of her garments in payment. This, however, was returned to her, with a glance of pity and surprise; for Sister Anne's appearance did not indicate poverty, and no one would have supposed her to be without money.

She tried to start on her way again, but the night increased her fears; and, in spite of the lamps which lighted the streets, the noise of horses and vehicles seemed to her still more terrifying than before. She trembled each moment with the fear of being run over with her child by the carriages which passed her on all sides. Again she seated herself on a bench.

Sister Anne was then on Rue Montmartre; several times during the day she had passed Rue de Provence, and had seen the house of M. de Montreville, but the poor little thing had not recognized it. She saw it was now impossible to

find his residence again ; she was almost ready to give up to despair, but she pressed her son to her heart, covered him with kisses, and endeavored to collect her strength. The little fellow smiled and played with her hair. He was at the age when a child knows no misfortune so long as it is in its mother's arms.

The evening wore on ; the passers-by were less numerous ; the carriages succeeded each other at longer intervals ; the shops had long since closed. Sister Anne lifted her eyes and looked about her with more assurance. Where should she seek a shelter for the night ? She was lost in the midst of dwelling-places. She dared not accost a single human being. Her pleading glance rested on the people who passed her ; sometimes a man would pause to look at her. "She is pretty !" he would remark, but when she presented her child he left as quickly as possible.

"Good God !" thought the unfortunate woman, "the people of Paris don't love children ! They run away as soon as I show them my child."

About midnight a company of soldiers passed along the street ; she trembled as they approached her, and one of them, advancing to her, said, "Go, go on. What are you doing there with your child ? Go home, or we'll take you there with a guard."

The harsh tone of the man who had just spoken made her shrink. She rose quickly and hastened away, pressing her child in her arms ;

but she had scarcely gone a hundred steps, when she remembered that she had left her little bundle on the stone bench, and it contained all her possessions. She ran to get it as fast as possible, and found the place where she had been seated, without any difficulty ; but, alas, her bundle was gone ! Unhappy creature ! This was her last resource.

She could not weep at this added misfortune ; an enormous weight seemed fastened upon her breast. As she went on with her child she dared not even think, but walked quickly without noticing where she went, and folded her arms about her boy with a new strength, although all her limbs were quivering with a nervous convulsion ; she had almost lost her consciousness of the evils she endured. She descended Rue Montmartre ; she reached the boulevard ; suddenly she saw trees, and her heart swelled with joy, — the poor little girl believed she had reached the end of the city where this evil fate pursued her. She thought she was to find the fields once more, and the woods. She ran quickly toward the first tree she could see, and pressed herself against it ; she touched it in a sort of intoxication, and then her tears burst forth.

She seated herself under this foliage, the sight of which had restored her courage, covered the baby with the apron she wore, and decided to wait here for the dawn.

Day returned before the young mute had

known a moment of sleep. She thought of the future which awaited her; she saw that she must ask public charity for herself and her child. If she had been alone, she would have waited death gladly; but she had her child, and she must struggle on for his sake. After their life at the farm, surrounded by every comfort, and with people who loved and cherished her little boy, how could she endure to beg her bread? It seemed to her she could never forgive herself for having left that sweet and quiet home. She blamed herself most when she looked at her boy. "Poor little one!" she thought to herself; "my selfishness has caused you all this trouble; but was I so wrong when I wished to bring you to your father? Oh, if I could return to that dear shelter; if I could see once more those good villagers who treated me like their own daughter! I must give up the hope of finding Frederic! If my sorrow deprives me of life, what will become of my boy in this immense city?"

The poor mother wept as she gazed at the little Frederic, who was still sleeping. Some peasants came by, on the way to market, and offered them some bread and some fruit; a milk-seller gave them milk to drink, and was especially pleased with the baby. All hearts are not so hard. Even the Parisians give gladly to the poor, although they often will not pause to hear a tale of suffering because they fear to be disturbed in

their own pleasures by the sight of the unfortunate.

During part of the day Sister Anne walked back and forth through the city, endeavoring to find the residence of her protector. Often she passed men who had the figure and the dress of Frederic; then she quickened her steps, she hastened to approach them, and as soon as she was near them she saw her error. Some regarded her in astonishment, and others smiled at her impertinently. She withdrew, quite ashamed and broken-hearted. "My God!" she said to herself, "shall I ever find him?"

Toward the close of the day, the provisions which had been given her in the morning were exhausted. She must hold out her hand, and arouse the pity of the passers-by. Sister Anne was obliged to look at her boy before she could gather courage to beg for bread. If at least those who do good would give kindly, the unfortunate would have less to complain of; but there is a harsh or disdainful air, that is nearly an insult, with which a great many people aid the unfortunate. "Alas!" thought Sister Anne, as her tears dropped, "is it a crime for me to be poor?"

She longed to leave Paris. The country people seemed to her more sympathetic, more gentle; with them she would not be so ashamed of her poverty; but what road could she take to find the hospitable farm once more? She could only

- put herself again into God's hands. He had always answered her prayers. Poor little thing! Only he can guide you to the end of your sorrows.

She did not know what road she should take, but her first thought was to leave the city, so she decided to follow a man who walked beside a little canvas-covered wagon. In reality the man was not long in reaching a suburb, and he very soon passed beyond the limits of the city. She followed always behind the little wagon, and as it went at a slow pace the young mother had no difficulty in reaching the country. She breathed more freely, she embraced her son, and, begging for him the kind support of Heaven, she directed her steps toward a village, to ask for help there.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FATEFUL MEETING

FREDERIC still loved his wife, perhaps less ardently, less rapturously than during the first six months of their union; but the constant companionship of man and wife had not extinguished his affection. How should it when each day he discovered in Constance new qualities, new virtues to admire and respect.

Beauty of face entrances, but it does not always enchain; beauty of mind and of character are necessary to ensure a lifelong affection, and happy is the husband who finds in his wife those attractions which time can neither diminish nor destroy.

Constance showed herself susceptible to one fault only. A feeling that is cruel in its effects upon the one who possesses it when its unfortunate owner does not know how to master it; but the young wife concealed it carefully in the depths of her heart: she was very jealous; the excess of her love for Frederic often made her a prey to secret fears as to whether she truly possessed his whole heart. Whenever he became dreamy and thoughtful, as it must be admitted he often did,

Constance became anxious, and a thousand fancies rose in her mind. What could trouble her husband? What caused him to sigh, and threw a melancholy shadow upon his face? He undoubtedly sighed at times. Before their marriage she attributed to his love for her the melancholy which rested upon the brow of Frederic; but, now that they were united, now that nothing could come between them, and nothing could repress their tenderness or trouble their happiness, why should Frederic sigh? Why should he sometimes be lost in dreams? Constance asked herself these questions; but the unselfish woman was very careful not to trouble her husband with them. It would have broken her heart to let him have the slightest suspicion of her anxieties. She would not torment her husband with her jealousy; she was resolved upon that. She would always be sweet, tender, and loving, and if she suffered she would conceal it carefully, because she would not annoy the one whom she loved better than life.

The death of the General threw a cloud upon their happiness at the close of the year. Monsieur Valmont was loved by all about him, and tenderly cherished by his niece, with whom he had held the place of a father. Nothing but the love of her husband could have softened the sorrow of Constance, so deeply was she affected by her uncle's death. Monsieur de Montreville mingled his regrets with her tears; he had lost a true friend;

but in old age we show more courage in the loss of those we love than we do when we are in the springtime of life. Is it because age increases our egotism? or is it because the heart which has become less sensitive to the ecstasy of love will not yield to the transports of friendship? or is it not rather the idea that the separation cannot be for long, because we shall soon rejoin those whom we have lost?

Constance was the sole heir of her uncle; the General was very wealthy, and he owned several farms and estates, which Frederic had never seen. He had planned to make a little tour, and visit his new possessions, and Constance was to remain in Paris, so that M. de Montreville should not be left alone. They feared he would grow melancholy over the loss of his friend; but how could Frederic leave his wife until her sorrow had become less intense? The journey was not at all pressing, and Frederic put it off from month to month; while Constance, who had not left her husband a single day since their marriage, could not decide to let him go.

Some time after the death of the General, Frederic learned that M. Ménard suffered greatly from gout, had no pupils, and was in anything but a fortunate condition; so he visited his old tutor, and invited him to come and make his home with him.

"I need," he said to him, "a man who is wise,

skilful, and will take an interest in my affairs. I need such a one to keep an eye on my accounts, and on my stewards, and to carry on the correspondence with them. Dear Ménard, you are this very man. Please understand that you do not come to us as an overseer, but as a dear friend, whom I like to have with me. If Heaven should give me children, you will educate them as you have educated their father."

Ménard accepted this offer with gratitude, and he was soon installed with Frederic, and Constance showed him every kindness and attention. She loved the old tutor, because he was so fond of her husband. Ménard, deeply touched by the attentions which the young wife lavished upon him, often said to her, kissing her hand with respect, —

"Oh, madame, you must have children; I will be their tutor, and they will be as sweet and handsome as monsieur your husband, and he is the pupil who brought me my greatest honor."

Constance smiled at this; probably she would have liked nothing better herself, but we cannot always have the desire of our hearts.

Dubourg had not abandoned his friend. Frederic said to him, "Come to me whenever you please. We will always keep a room for you," and Dubourg profited by this invitation, not to live with Frederic in Paris, but to visit sometimes his country house. One usually saw Dubourg toward the last half of the quarter, for he received

his income quarterly ; but he never could make it last more than half of the allotted time. When it was exhausted he began to dine with Frederic, if he was in Paris, or took a little tour in the country, saying, —

“Thanks to you, good friend, I live as if I had double my sixteen hundred livres of income. I spend my revenue in six months, and the rest of the time you make up my expenses.”

The gay character of Dubourg pleased Constance, and Frederic was always glad to see his friend; for he knew that, though he had been a gay fellow, his wife would never hear a word from him which was not perfectly respectful, and that he would always regard her as sacredly as if she were his sister. One can forgive serious faults in those who respect friendship. There are many people sincere, virtuous, and of fine feeling, but they seem to take pleasure in putting the houses of their friends in an uproar.

When Dubourg and Ménard were united at Frederic's home, and this was often the case at the end of the quarter, the old tutor never failed to sing the praises of the household which was so constantly under his eyes.

“They are Orpheus and Eurydice ; they are Deucalion and Pyrrha ; they are Philemon and Baucis ; they are Pyramus and Thisbe,” he exclaimed.

“O Heavens!” said Dubourg, “Frederic has a

charming wife, a woman who has every good quality, an endless treasure. He would be the very devil if he were not contented."

"No doubt that's true, but if I had not taught my pupil excellent principles of wisdom and morality, perhaps he would not be so well behaved, even if he loves his wife. There was the Czar Peter the Great; he adored Catherine, but that did not prevent his having many mistresses. There have been numberless princes who had very bad morals; and I have known excellent husbands, who behave most improperly upon occasion."

"Dear Monsieur Ménard, don't boast too much of Frederic's wisdom; if he only had you as guide—"

"You would perhaps have been a better one. That was an example of it when you pretended to be the Baron Potoski."

"Never mind; hush, Monsieur Ménard; we'll forget that journey. We were neither of us as wise as we might have been. I hope you have never mentioned this matter to Madame de Montreville. Do not speak, especially, of that little adventure in the wood, of Frederic's passion for —"

"Oh, what do you take me for? I know how awkward that would be, *non est hic locus*, and Madame de Montreville might be much hurt at such a story. Of course it all happened before her marriage. She has too much tolerance and generosity to blame her husband for his boyish follies."

"But, in spite of her generosity, there are some things a woman does not hear with pleasure. It is always best to avoid saying anything which would make her think that another at any time possessed her husband's heart. Though a woman knows that a young man must have been in love before she married him, she always believes that he never loved anyone so much, and it hurts her very much to realize that he may have experienced as vivid a sentiment for another as for herself."

"I understand that very well. It is like the cook; you must always tell him that you never ate such good macaroni."

"That's it exactly. Your comparisons are astonishingly accurate; besides, I think this young woman could be very jealous; she's terribly in love with her husband."

"Well, I don't know but you're right. I noticed one day that she was not quite so gay as usual. I suppose it was because her husband amused himself for a quarter of an hour caressing the cat."

"Oh, the devil take you with your cats! How can you suspect Constance of such foolishness?"

"I don't see why that's foolish; there are many men who prefer a dog to their wife, just as there are women who love a canary better than their husband. Of course my pupil is not one of that kind; but —"

"Has Madame de Montreville ever asked you if you knew the cause of Frederic's melancholy, of his abstraction?"

"Why, yes; I remember she asked me one evening very privately, 'Do you know what makes Frederic sigh so much? Can you imagine what causes it?'"

"And what did you tell her?"

"Why, zounds! I said to her, 'Madame, he has undoubtedly a bad digestion, and that interferes with his breathing. It is often so with me.' Since that time she has never questioned me on this subject."

"I'm quite sure of that."

Frederic might be happy; but he had not forgotten the little mute of the wood, and sometimes the memory of her threw him into a profound reverie. He wished to know the fate of Sister Anne; but he did not dare speak of it to his father. The Count had promised him that he would watch over her, and Frederic knew that he could trust absolutely in his father's word; but he wanted to know where she was, what she did. He wondered if she still loved him. The ungrateful fellow did not doubt it, though he had been so unfaithful himself. His love for Constance became constantly more calm and peaceable, and in these days the memory of Sister Anne recurred continually to his mind. A smile, a caress from his wife would immediately make him forget the

young mute ; but a little later her image returned once more. It seems as if the heart of a man always needed memories or hopes.

Frederic had been married to Constance for two years. Their only sorrow was that they had no child. Frederic wished for a son ; Constance longed to offer her husband a proof of her love, and M. Ménard ardently desired the arrival of little pupils.

The Count of Montreville did not live with his children, but he often visited them. He still kept the servant who had accompanied him when he was attacked in the forest, and whom he had forbidden to speak of this adventure. But one evening when he was gossiping with the people in the office, the valet forgot his master's command, and as each one present related a story of an encounter with thieves, he felt that he must do his part ; so he told of the perils he had shared with the Count, and how his master had been saved as by a miracle, through the cleverness of a young woman who was mute. Frederic's servant was present when this story was told, and the next morning, when dressing his master, he asked him if Dumont's story was true, because he considered Dumont a liar. He had never heard that the Count had been attacked by thieves, or had been saved by a young mute woman.

These last words attracted Frederic's attention ; a secret presentiment warned him that they

referred to Sister Anne. He said nothing to his valet, but hastened to his father's hotel. The Count was absent, but Dumont was there; Frederic could speak to him alone, and this was just what he wanted. At the first questions Dumont blushed. He recalled the Count's command, which he had forgotten; but it was no longer possible for him to be silent. Besides, he did not think it would do any harm to speak of this matter to his master's son. He could not understand why the Count had made such a mystery of this adventure.

The story of the young girl whom his father had taken to the farm made a vivid impression upon Frederic. From the first word he did not doubt that it all related to Sister Anne. He demanded a thousand details of Dumont, and the servant told him all that he knew.

"Do you think she remained at the farm?" asked Frederic.

"Oh, yes, monsieur. She was too delicate to continue her journey; and then, I forgot to tell you, she was about to become a mother."

"What are you saying, Dumont? This young girl —"

"Girl or woman — I know nothing about that; but I tell you she must have had that hope."

Sister Anne had had a child! Frederic understood now why his father had made a mystery of the whole affair. He inquired exactly the name

of the village, and the locality of the farm in which the young mute had been left. Then he gave Dumont a purse of money. He warned him, in his turn, to keep secret the story of this adventure, and not to mention their conversation; and Dumont promised to say nothing, although he wondered greatly over this conduct of the father and son.

As soon as Frederic knew that Sister Anne had made him a father, he had not one moment's peace. The idea pursued him constantly; he was eager to see his child. His reveries became more frequent; his brow was often clouded, and Constance heard him sigh. The young wife did not dare to question her husband, but she suffered and tormented herself in secret. She wished to be the sole possessor of Frederic's thoughts, to fill his soul; but she herself was near him; she pressed his hand in hers; so she could not be the cause of his sighs.

When she could not restrain the question, and asked Frederic what was the matter, he collected himself; he pressed her to his heart, and said to her, "What else can I wish, when I always have you?" But even then Constance found something in his smile, something melancholy and dreamy, which did not seem to her entirely happy.

Frederic said to his wife that he must begin this journey which he had talked of so long; he could not delay longer. Constance had thought that

Ménard would be his companion, and take her place, for Frederic had mentioned this plan ; but he had changed his mind, and now decided to go alone, and she dared not try to keep him, nor propose to accompany him. She feared to seem distrustful or importunate, or to offend him in any way ; and besides, if Frederic had wished her to go with him, he only needed to hint such a thing ; she would have left anything to follow him ; but he never suggested it for a moment. Constance sorrowed in secret, but she always showed to her husband a calm and smiling face.

Frederic bade her farewell, tenderly promising to hasten his return, and be with her in a month's time. She tried to be courageous, and he left, recommending her to Ménard and to Dubourg ; but Constance had no need of entertainment ; although absent, Frederic would be always near her, always reign in her thoughts.

It was the month of August. At this beautiful season the air of the country was especially delightful. Constance decided to visit her estate in Montmorency during her husband's absence. There she would be quieter than in Paris, and nothing would distract her from the thought of him ; she could count the moments which must elapse until he returned to her. The Count of Montreville spent some time with his daughter-in-law in the country ; but a man of the Count's age has certain fixed habits, and distractions are

almost necessary to him. The Count loved Paris, where he had a great number of acquaintances, and it flattered his inclinations to meet them. After a week in the country he returned to his favorite city to devote himself to his accustomed pleasures.

Constance remained alone with M. Ménard and the servants. They were at the beginning of the quarter, and Dubourg had not yet come to the country. Constance did not expect to be wearied; when the heart is well filled the head is never empty. The old tutor was her assiduous companion; he spoke to her of Greek and Roman history, and quoted his classic authors, sometimes plunging very deeply into ancient history. He was not always sure that this amused Constance; but when he had finished speaking, she never failed to reassure him with an amiable smile.

Toward the close of the day Constance walked out to the belvedere. It was her favorite retreat; it was there that Frederic and she had begun to understand each other; it was there that she had received her first impressions of love for him. Since that time she had visited the belvedere very often, and now she went there to await the return of her husband. Seated upon this eminence, she commanded a view of the entire valley, and could look over all the country which surrounded the walls of her garden.

One beautiful evening, when she cast her eyes over the road that ran before her house, Constance saw a young woman seated at the foot of a tree, and holding in her arms a little boy, not much more than a baby. This unfortunate creature appeared to be in the greatest misery. She was watching her child with a sort of anguish, and covered his face with kisses in the abandon of her despair. Constance was deeply moved. At this moment M. Ménard ascended to the belvedere.

"Look!" she said. "Do you see that poor woman down there, how she is kissing her baby? She must be in great trouble. Do you see her?"

"In a moment, madame," said Ménard; "I'm hunting for my glasses. Where the devil have I put them?"

At this moment the poor woman raised her eyes and saw Constance; her glance became so expressive, so supplicating, that it was impossible not to understand her.

"Oh, she is weeping!" cried Constance. "Wait, wait, you poor thing; I'm coming down!"

Constance quickly left the belvedere, while Ménard looked on all sides, searching in vain for his glasses.

At a distance of a few steps a little gate opened upon the fields; Constance unfastened it, finding herself very near the unfortunate one whom she wished to help. As she approached the poor woman, she was still more sorry for her, for the

features of the mendicant showed both suffering and despair; but it was especially for her child that she besought the pity of Constance. When the lady approached, the poor woman presented him to her, and great tears rolled from her eyes, reddened by weeping and misery.

"Poor little fellow!" said Constance; "how pale he is, how thin! But he has very pretty features."

She took the child in her arms and said to the mother,—

"Come with me; I will give you what you need. Follow me."

The unfortunate woman rose to her feet and tried to walk, but she fell immediately; she had not the strength to advance.

"Good God!" cried Constance, "how dreadful! This unhappy mother! Monsieur Ménard, come and help me take her to the house."

"Here I am, here I am, madame; they were in my waistcoat pocket," cried Ménard, as he hurried forward. "Oh, oh, well, here is someone who needs help."

"Hold her up, help her to walk; poor woman, how sorry I am for her! My God! is it possible that there is such suffering in the world?"

"It is very possible, surely, madame; but we must find out *causa causarum*."

With the aid of Ménard and Constance, who carried the child, the poor woman was able to

reach the house, where Constance hastened to do all that she could for the comfort of the mother and her little one ; as the poor mendicant regained her strength, she watched her with interest.

"See now," she said to M. Ménard ; "she is very young yet, and in such a pitiful state. Her features are very attractive. It breaks my heart to see her. Poor mother ! where did you come from, and where do you want to go ?"

To these questions the unfortunate woman could make no response. We begin to imagine the reason. Constance had just been the means of helping Sister Anne and her little son.

It was ten days since the young mute had left Paris, and since then she had wandered about the country. Forced to ask everywhere for shelter and food, often coldly repelled, often deprived of food for herself and her boy, Sister Anne had felt her strength diminish and her courage disappear day by day. Despair entered her heart, undermined all her forces, and the unfortunate woman was waiting for death when she embraced her child so tenderly. At that very moment the good fortune which had brought her to the house of Madame de Montreville permitted that lady to perceive her and come to her succor.

Constance, astonished at receiving no response to her questions, repeated them, when Sister Anne put her fingers on her lips, and shook her head sorrowfully, to indicate her cruel affliction.

"O Heavens, she cannot speak! Poor woman! and she is alone with her child, without money, without a guide, without even being able to ask her way. Oh, that is too much! It is too bad to endure!"

Constance leaned toward Sister Anne, the tears rolling down her cheeks at the sight of such misfortune. The young mute, deeply touched by this kindly pity, to which she was not accustomed, took the hand of her benefactress, covered it with kisses and pressed it to her heart.

"My faith!" cried Ménard, and he drew out his pocket handkerchief, for the good tutor could not help being much touched by this scene. "My faith! I confess she was in a very critical condition. The tongue is very necessary in every moment of life, and I don't see how anyone can get on without it. It would be like a fox without a tail, a butterfly without wings, or a fish without fins."

Constance did not cease her attentions to Sister Anne and her son. The little fellow already laughed in her arms. He was at that happy age where sorrow quickly disappears at sight of a cake or a toy. Constance could not let him go from her arms.

"Wait, now," said she to Monsieur Ménard; "look how he smiles at me."

"Well, I should think he would; you have been giving him candy. We catch men with

sugared words, and children like the sugar without words. In that case, children show more wisdom than men."

"What pretty features he has, and what lovely eyes! It may be an illusion, but it seems to me he has eyes like my husband."

"My pupil? Well, isn't it rather difficult to see a resemblance between eyes of two years and eyes of twenty-three?"

"Poor little fellow! At all events, I love him already. How happy I should be if I had a child like that!"

"That will come, madame. Sarah was ninety years old when she gave birth to Isaac. You have plenty of time still."

Sister Anne felt great pleasure when she saw Constance caress her son. Madame de Montreville, who could not keep her eyes off him, was still convinced that he bore a strong resemblance to her husband. M. Ménard looked at Sister Anne with deep pity; it never occurred to him that this poor mendicant was the same young girl whom he had seen in the wood at Vizille, seated by Frederic's side. It would have been strange had he recognized her, for he had only seen her for a moment. Then she was radiant with the pleasure of love; her charming features were not worn by tears and sorrow; the fatigue of a difficult journey, and the continuance of constant suffering, had not given her a wavering walk.

Besides, Ménard had never learned that the young girl was a mute; he could not, therefore, suspect that she was before him.

"Do you know how to write, poor woman?" said Constance to Sister Anne.

The poor creature made a sign that she did not.

"What a pity!" continued Constance. "I should so like to know the name of this pretty child."

The young mute looked eagerly about her. They had taken her into a small room which looked out upon the garden. She went out, beckoning to Constance to follow her. She broke a branch from the nearest bush; then she bent toward the earth and traced upon the sand which covered the garden walks the name of her boy.

"Frederic!" cried Constance, as she read the name that Sister Anne had written. "What! you have named your child Frederic? Oh, I am sure that will make him still more dear to me. Frederic! But that is exactly the name of my husband. What do you say to that, Monsieur Ménard? Is it not singular?"

"I don't see anything very extraordinary in that," said the tutor, "as there are a great number of Martins, of Pierres and of Pauls, so there ought to be a good many Frederics. I only know one name invented by Plautus which never became common. It was this, — Thesaurochrysoni-cochrysides. So if I had been blest with a son I

should have given him this name, though it is not very easy to pronounce."

Constance had again taken the little boy on her knees. She called him Frederic, and the child responded to this name, which he was accustomed to on the farm; he lisped the word "Mamma," and looked about, seeming to search for the good villagers who had talked to him.

"I really wish my husband could see this lovely child," said Constance. She seemed lost in thought for some time. Then she approached Sister Anne, took her hand, and observed tenderly her slightest signs, so that she might understand her answers.

"Where were you going with your little boy? She doesn't know. Unhappy woman! You have neither father nor mother? They are dead. And the father of this child, your husband; why is he not with you? She weeps, poor little thing! He has abandoned her. How could anyone abandon such a pretty child, such an interesting woman? How unfortunate she is! Oh, it is frightful! He must have a heart of stone. But be comforted, my dear; dry your tears; I will not desert you. Yes, I have decided that. I will take care of you and of your child. You shall not leave me any more. You shall live with me; I will find something for you to do. Perhaps you can work with the needle; or I will teach you to sew. I will have your little boy educated under my own eyes. My husband is good, he is sensible and generous;

oh, I'm very sure that he will not blame me for what I am doing. He will love you too, and you shall end your days with us. Do you understand, poor little mother? Don't cry any more, and don't tremble any more for your poor baby. From this time on misery shall not touch you; and — well, look now, Monsieur Ménard; she is throwing herself at my feet. She is kissing my hand, as if I were God. What good would riches be if you could not make someone happy with them?"

"Madame, to give in sweet charity is one of the precepts of the gospel; but unhappily every one does not practice it as you do."

"But it is time to think where this young woman must sleep," said Constance, as she led Sister Anne toward the house. "After all the fatigue she has endured, she must be in need of rest. Where shall we have her sleep? Oh, there is a little lodge in the garden. My husband wanted to use it as a study; but he can work in his room. Yes, that will be best. Monsieur Ménard, please go and give the orders. Let them carry a bed there, so that it will be ready for her this evening; tomorrow I will make the other arrangements. There she will be quiet; she will have her son near her, and in the morning she can walk in the garden."

M. Ménard went to tell the servants to make ready the pavilion in the garden, while Constance

remained with Sister Anne. The poor girl could not sufficiently show her gratitude. Her features already evinced less depression. Constance, watching her closely, found her more interesting every moment. The young mute was not at all like those professional mendicants who are always trying to arouse sympathy by means of complaints or importunities; then, when they receive help, they have no feeling of gratitude. Sister Anne was sweet and shrinking. She seemed surprised when she inspired interest. It was easy to read in her eyes her recognition of the kindness she received; and there was about her, in all her person, an indescribable something which seemed to indicate that she was not born in the lowest classes of society.

"When I look at her," said Constance, "I am more and more astonished that anyone could desert her. Her features are so delicate. Her eyes are so soft and full of charm. How pretty she would be if she were better dressed! And you, dear little fellow, — oh, I shall take great care of you."

Ménard coming to announce that everything was in readiness at the pavilion to receive the poor woman and her child, Constance took Sister Anne by the arm and led her thither, observing everything, to see that no comfort was lacking for the night; then she left her, telling her to sleep in peace, and be no longer troubled or anxious.

Sister Anne pressed her hand upon her heart, and Constance went away deeply moved, remarking to Ménard, "Oh, now I shall not miss Frederic so much; I shall have something else to think of. I shall forget my own sorrows in solacing those of others."

CHAPTER XIV

THE ARRIVAL OF DUBOURG. THE STORM GATHERS

SISTER ANNE upon awakening the next morning was afraid at first that all that she saw around her was but the effect of an illusion. After suffering the most pitiable poverty and distress, after wandering so long, often unable to obtain a shelter where she and her baby could pass the night; after experiencing all that a mother can who fears every moment for her child's life, to find herself at last in this pleasant and comfortable room, sleeping on a good bed, relieved of all her anxiety for the future, all her care for the present, and surrounded by kindly people, was hardly comprehensible.

In place of the cold disdain of unthinking pity she had received the most touching and loving attention from a generous woman, who doubled her alms by the grace with which she bestowed them. The change was so sudden that the shrinking heart, withered by its bitter experiences, feared to yield to the feeling of a happiness in which it could not yet believe.

Sister Anne embraced her son, then she rose

and led him into the garden which surrounded the little house where she had slept. What a delicious retreat it was! what a happiness to live there, and guide the first steps of her child through the flowers! Little Frederic already ran alone in the pathways of lilies and roses; if he stumbled, the thick sand broke his fall, and the child waited, smiling, until his mother came and helped him to run again.

Constance wakened very early; all night she had thought of the young mute and her son. The kindness she planned did not allow her to sleep; for pleasure also brings insomnia, and women throw into all they do an ardor and excitement which is unusual with men; if they are often absorbed in dress, deeply preoccupied with frivolous matters, how much energy of spirit will they not manifest in doing a good action?

Madame de Montreville hastened to descend to the garden. She wished to see again her new charge. She found Sister Anne and her son seated under an arbor of honeysuckle. The little boy played at his mother's feet. When she saw Constance coming, she rose, and hastened toward her. She seized one of her hands and pressed it to her heart.

"You are already up," said Constance, kissing little Frederic. "How did you pass the night? Well? So much the better. After such great weariness you needed rest. This poor little fellow

smiles at me; he really seems to recognize me. But I don't want you to keep on these clothes. Come, come with me; I wish to give you one of my dresses. I am sure it will fit you; we are nearly the same figure. Oh, you mustn't refuse me; you must obey me or I shall be offended."

Constance led Sister Anne and the boy to her apartment. There she selected one of her simplest dresses and compelled her protégée to put it on. With this new costume the young mute seemed to gain fresh graces; and her timidity, her embarrassment, had none of that awkwardness which people so often reveal when they wear garments to which they are not accustomed.

"She is charming," said Constance. She called her maid, and told her to arrange the hair of the young woman very simply but tastefully. After it was done she said, "How pretty she is now! and she will look still better after a few days, when she has recovered from her weariness. Her color will be better, and that will be more becoming. Come and look at yourself, and don't cast down your eyes. You need not be ashamed because you are so pretty."

Constance led Sister Anne to a mirror. The young mute glanced at herself with some hesitancy at first, but soon she was a little reassured, and she blushed with pleasure; a young woman is never quite untouched by an adornment. After Sister Anne had looked at herself for some min-

utes, she threw herself at the knees of Madame de Montreville.

"Oh, I don't want you to kneel to me," said Constance, as she raised her; "I want you to love me, and I want you to be happy; that is all. As to your boy, I'm going to make him beautiful too. I shall send to Paris for the things he ought to have."

M. Ménard, who had not lost sleep over the misfortunes of the poor mendicant, at length came downstairs, and was quite surprised when he saw Sister Anne in such different apparel, and with such a happy air.

"Well, Monsieur Ménard, how do you like her in this?" Constance asked him.

"My faith, madame, she is so improved that I did not know her at first."

"You see, in her other clothes you observed nothing but her misfortune. You did not notice the delicacy of her features."

"There is no doubt that misfortune makes us homely; besides, elegance always adds new charms. We don't dine so pleasantly when the tablecloth is not clean; and the most ordinary wine tastes better out of cut glass."

All day long Constance was occupied with her plans for Sister Anne. The apartment on the first floor of the pavilion was arranged and ornamented with everything that could make it more delightful. By the orders of Madame de Montreville, a

pretty little cradle was carried in, and stood near the bed of the young mother. Pots of flowers were placed on the window sills. "She cannot have other pleasures," said Constance; "books and music are closed to her. The poor little thing knows nothing of these delights, so we must surround her with what she can enjoy."

Sister Anne did not know how to show her appreciation of so much kindness. Constance was amused at the astonishment which each novelty roused in the young mute. She was especially delighted with the effect of the piano, which Sister Anne heard for the first time; Constance mingled her sweet voice with its music, and so keen was Sister Anne's pleasure that the tears sprang to her eyes. The joy of music was vividly realized by this burning soul, which had never learned to conceal its emotions. When she saw the arts of sewing and embroidering, Sister Anne sighed, and manifested her regret that she knew nothing of these things. But Constance assured her that she would instruct her, and the young mute had such a great desire to be useful that in a little while she was mistress of these various occupations.

A week had rolled away since Constance had given a home to Sister Anne and her son, and every instant seemed to increase the attachment which she had for them. The child began to love Constance immediately, and responded eagerly to

her caresses. Sister Anne was always sweet, attentive, and grateful, and she proved to Madame de Montreville that she had not misplaced her generosity.

One morning, while the young mute walked with her son in the gardens, Dubourg arrived at his friend's country house. It was past the middle of the quarter. Constance, knowing from her husband Dubourg's habits, was astonished that he had not come before.

"You are very welcome," said Madame de Montreville. "You promised my husband to come and see me during his absence, but I began to think you were not coming at all."

"Madame," said Dubourg, smiling, "I am not one of those friends who pretend to make wives forget their husbands, but if I can amuse you a little, I shall be glad to do so until the next quarter, and in fact all the year, if I can be of any use to you."

"Oh, you will see something new here. I have someone with me now. During Frederic's absence I have made an acquaintance."

"I am sure that will please your husband."

"I hope so, truly."

"My dear Dubourg," said Ménard, "madame is too modest to tell you that she has taken in a poor woman and her child, and saved them from starvation."

"Never mind now; don't talk about it, Mon-

sieur Ménard. Is not this young woman worthy of all I have done for her? Could I have found a better object for my kindness?"

"I confess that she has learned to work very quickly. I really think I can teach her to read."

"You will see, Dubourg, how pretty she is, and how interesting, and her son also. She has a little boy, two years old, who is perfectly charming."

"Ah, she has a son?"

"Yes; I am sure you will say, as I do, that he resembles — but I want you to see that for yourself; I will go and find her."

Constance hastened away to the garden.

"What a lovely woman she is!" said Dubourg. "Frederic certainly ought to consider himself fortunate, and why is he staying away so long?"

"My dear Dubourg, business must come before everything. Of course he has a prize — we know that; but he has inherited with his wife both farms and estates. He must become acquainted with his property."

"But why doesn't he take his wife with him? Do you not think she would have been glad to accompany him?"

"I won't say that, but — he is good; you always know where to find him."

"Hum! I hope this voyage doesn't conceal some project. It would break Frederic's heart to cause his wife any pain, but you never know what these sentimental men are going to do."

"But I tell you that my pupil is visiting his property. What the devil! And how about dominoes? You begin to be a little strong in the game?"

"Well, I am better than you, because you never know where the double six is. But let us go and find Madame de Montreville. I am curious to see this woman who interests her so much."

"It is a woman with whom it would be difficult not to agree, for a quarrel can only result from a discussion; when there is no discussion there can be no quarrel; and it is not possible in this case to have a discussion because—"

But Dubourg did not hear the last of Ménard's sentence. He was already in the garden. He saw Madame de Montreville from a distance holding a child in her arms, and near her was a young woman, dressed in a simple white gown, with her hair neatly arranged. He went on. The young woman perceived him. She ran, she flew toward him; she seized him by the arm; she looked at him with anxiety; and Dubourg remained stupefied, for he recognized Sister Anne.

"My God! what is the matter with her?" cried Constance, as she approached Dubourg, who had not recovered from his surprise in recognizing the young mute in such a different costume, and with Constance, who held the baby in her arms.

"How your presence seems to excite her!"

cried Constance. "Why does she look at you like that? She seems to question you; her eyes are positively talking. Do you know the poor little thing?"

"But, no — yes; oh, well, I saw her once; but she looked so different then. This dress and the child, — my faith, I did not recognize her!"

Dubourg was troubled, embarrassed. He did not know what to say. Sister Anne still held his arm, and her eyes begged him to answer their questions.

"What! you know her?" cried Constance with surprise. "But what does she want of you now? Can you imagine what is interesting her so much?"

"Oh, pardon me. I begin to understand. I knew this poor girl's lover, and she is asking me for news of him."

"But tell her quickly then; see, her eyes are full of tears."

"My faith! I don't know anything good to tell her; her betrayer has gone to a distant country. Doubtless she will never see him again. I do not know what has become of him."

Dubourg had addressed Sister Anne. "Like you, I have not seen him again; so, poor child, you must try to forget him."

Sister Anne paid the greatest attention to these last words of Dubourg. She dropped her head upon her bosom when he had finished speaking; then she gave free course to her tears, and, retir-

ing, seated herself in a little grove, where she could yield to her sorrow.

"Poor woman!" said Constance. "Alas! she must have loved the man who abandoned her. Who could have the heart to abuse such innocence?"

"Madame, it was a young painter, who was then travelling for his education. In looking for pretty views he met Sister Anne, for that is her name. She is, I believe, a peasant's daughter; but I can't prove that, because I don't know her family. At all events, my friend saw her; he fell in love with her, — these painters have an exalted imagination. The result is the boy. That is all I know about it, for I only saw this young girl once, when I was walking with my friend."

"I think he was very guilty. You men treat such things lightly. In your eyes, it is a very slight thing to betray a woman and then leave her. You think these are only the frivolities of youth, and you are proud of sowing wild oats."

"Oh, madame, I can flatter myself that I have never betrayed anyone."

"I am speaking generally; but I am very certain that my Frederic would never be guilty of such conduct. He is too sensitive, too loving, ever to abuse a young heart. See what terrible consequences come from such weakness. This poor little thing was ashamed of her fault, found herself abandoned, and fled from her relations and

the place of her birth. Without money, and incapable of making her wants known by speech, she has wandered everywhere through the country and in the city, a prey to the horrors of want. Unfortunate creature! how she must have suffered! Oh, had you seen her when I found her, she would have filled you with pity! But from this time she will have a friend. I shall never desert her, and, if I cannot make her entirely happy, at least I can save her from all fear of poverty and misery."

Dubourg made no response; the sight of Sister Anne had given him much cause for thought. "Your presence has renewed her sorrow, because it has recalled her betrayer," said Constance. "Go away for a little while, and I will try to console her, although I know very well there is not much consolation for such pain. If Frederic should forget me, could I ever know a moment of happiness? But, at least, she has her boy, and his caresses will soften her sorrow."

Constance carried the little Frederic to his mother's knees, and Dubourg returned swiftly to the house, where he sought Ménard. The latter, who did not know what had happened, was not a little alarmed when he saw the startled look of his former travelling companion.

"All is lost, Monsieur Ménard!" cried Dubourg, as he paused before the tutor.

"What! who is lost? Is it another coach of

King Stanislas, or the snuffbox of the King of Prussia? You know I am not interested in those things."

"Oh, I'm not talking about such follies; this is a very serious matter; it concerns the happiness, the repose of Frederic and his wife."

"Well, I wager it's not true; you are concocting me another tale, just to hoax me, but non me ludit amabilis insania."

"Will you listen to me, Monsieur Ménard? By Heaven! how is it that a man of your age could not prevent such a catastrophe?"

"Why do you say of my age, Monsieur Dubourg? Please explain yourself."

"What! and you have let Madame de Montreville receive and take into her house —"

"Well, who now?"

"Heavens! that woman for whom Frederic has committed a thousand follies, who turned his head, with whom he lived six weeks in the wood; that young girl whom he adored, whom he still loves perhaps, for the heart of man is incomprehensible; — well, that Sister Anne, the little mute of the wood, the young girl of Vizille, is she whom Madame de Montreville has taken into her house."

"O my God! and who told you that?"

"What! and didn't you recognize her?"

"Recognize her! Why, I saw her but for one minute, and then from a distance. I haven't so

good an eye for young girls as have you, monsieur; and how could I suspect it? I didn't know she was a mute. Did anyone tell me? And if they didn't tell me, could I divine it? How should I know? These young people are unreasonable. Could I know Latin if they hadn't instructed me in it?"

"Well, you know it now."

"Good Heavens! they have beaten it into me. Good God! the blows I received for the Epitome, and how many tasks I did before I learned the stories of Phædrus!"

"Will you pay attention, Monsieur Ménard? I am talking to you of Sister Anne, and she is here with Frederic's wife!"

"I understand; I understand very well."

"When Frederic returns she will see him; her trouble, her tears, her caresses and excitement, will discover the truth! Think, then, what Madame de Montreville will experience! How will she bear it? She adores her husband, and believes him a model of fidelity; and here is his mistress in the house with a child,—his child, remember!"

"Yes, yes; I thought of all that."

"Well, speak; what shall we do about it?"

"I don't know what to do."

"It is impossible that we should let Sister Anne stay under the same roof with Frederic!"

"To be sure, it's very embarrassing; but she was in such an unhappy state!"

"Why, do you think I want to abandon her? Oh, my income is only sixteen hundred livres, but I would give this to her with a good heart, so that her presence need not destroy the happiness of these young people. Yes, I will go to work again, if necessary, or I will pass the four quarters of the year with Frederic; but, surely, this young woman and her child shall be protected from suffering."

"That is very good of you, dear Dubourg. If I had anything I would do the same; but I have nothing except my old classics, and they would do her no good, because she cannot read."

"But how can we get Sister Anne away from this house?"

"That will be very difficult, because Madame de Montreville already loves the young mute. She is really foolish about the baby. She thinks he looks so much like my pupil, and indeed I think there is no doubt about the resemblance."

"I don't know what to invent, what to imagine. When will Frederic return?"

"In eight days; we have plenty of time."

"Time! Those eight days will soon be gone, and if he should find Sister Anne here —"

"It seems to me that we might warn the little thing not to say a word."

"I know very well she won't say anything, but her gestures, the expression of her features, will talk plainly enough."

"Well, now, I confess to you that I have often no idea what she means."

Dubourg tortured his spirit to find a way to remove Sister Anne and her son, while Monsieur Ménard remained with his eyes fixed upon the snuffbox, and appeared to be considering very deeply; but in reality he was thinking about a rabbit pasty, which had come from Paris that evening, and which was to appear at dinner.

Constance returned with the young mute and her son. Sister Anne's features betrayed her sorrow; but she was calmer, more resigned. When she saw Dubourg she smiled sorrowfully, and presented her son to the young man, who looked at the boy with great interest, and was startled to notice the resemblance which he already bore to Frederic.

"Don't you find him charming?" asked Constance.

"Yes, madame," replied Dubourg, as he kissed the child. "He is a beautiful boy."

"Is he like his father?"

"Very much."

"And don't you think there is quite a likeness to my husband?"

"Oh, not at all."

"That's very singular; it struck me the first thing. His name is Frederic too, and I believe I love him more on that account."

Constance took the child in her arms; Sister

Anne looked at her with much affection, and Dubourg turned his eyes away to conceal the sensations which this scene gave him

During the rest of the day Dubourg racked his brains to think of some means of getting Sister Anne away from Madame de Montreville; but he could hit upon no plan. What excuse could he make to entice a young woman from a home where the sweetest cares were lavished upon her, and where her son was covered with caresses? Sister Anne would never consent; she would see in any such suggestion nothing but frightful ingratitude, and her loving and tender heart was incapable of conceiving such a thought. If he told her that the husband of Constance was her betrayer, the task would be still more difficult; for the desire to see Frederic outweighed every other consideration in her soul. She believed that she was united to her lover forever by the oaths which they had exchanged; how could she understand that another woman had also a right to him, if not more just at least more sacred than hers?

Dubourg dared not risk this means, and he tormented himself in vain to think of another. At last he went to Ménard and said, —

“Well, have you found any expedient by which we can get Sister Anne out of this house?”

Ménard took another pinch of snuff, and reflected for five minutes, then he responded with great serenity, “I have not thought of a thing.”



In talking with Constance, Dubourg endeavored to induce her to send the young mute and her son to live on one of her estates, at a distance from Paris; but Madame de Montreville was quite opposed to this idea.

"But why," she said, "should I deprive myself of the society of this young woman and of the sight of her boy? I already love him as if he belonged to me. Far from me, who would give the same care to this unfortunate one in her affliction? No, I will never separate myself from her. Each day I feel that I become more attached to her; and if you could see how grateful she is because of what I have done for her. Oh, I have read in the depth of her soul! I have not misplaced my generosity, and I am sure that Frederic will approve of what I have done."

"My faith!" said Dubourg to himself, "I have done all that I can; and, after I've given myself the headache to separate these two women, I don't believe anything more could be expected of me. I will let things take their course and await events. All that I can do now is to warn Frederic when he returns."

The evening of the day on which Dubourg arrived, Madame de Montreville said to him, —

"I want you to see the pleasure that music gives to this poor unfortunate. When she hears me sing and play upon the piano, it seems as if she would speak."



Constance took Sister Anne by the hand and led her to a seat near the piano. The young mute was more sorrowful than usual, for the presence of Dubourg had recalled all her painful memories ; but she smiled at her benefactress, and made every effort to appear less melancholy.

Constance had played several pieces, when she paused a moment and said, —

“I have not yet sung for her the pretty ballad that my husband is so fond of.”

Constance played the introduction to her song, but Dubourg heeded not the music. He was thinking of the strange chance which had brought Sister Anne to the wife of Frederic. Ménard, seated in a corner, endeavored to comprehend the melody ; little Frederic played near his mother, who listened attentively to her benefactress.

Constance had scarcely sung the first words of the ballad when Sister Anne displayed an excitement which seemed to increase every moment. She leaned toward Madame de Montreville. She listened, but she scarcely breathed ; every fibre in her body quivered ; all her faculties were absorbed by a powerful memory ; and Constance had not finished her stanza before a mortal paleness covered the features of the young mute, who groaned plaintively and fainted away.

Constance, absorbed in her music, did not notice the suffering of Sister Anne ; but, hearing her groan, she ran toward her immediately.

"Good God!" she cried; "what is the matter now? She has lost consciousness!"

Dubourg hastened to the assistance of the young woman, and M. Ménard hurried to find the salts and bring help.

"Do you understand what can be the matter with her? She listened with pleasure, and suddenly she fainted."

"Madame," said Dubourg, who wished to take advantage of this circumstance to carry out a little plan he had formed, "do you see that this young woman is not always entirely herself, that there are some moments when she seems in delirium?"

"No, I haven't observed that. Since she has been here she has been very reasonable, and her melancholy appeared quite natural to me. Poor little thing! she does not open her eyes."

"Oh, that's nothing. No doubt the emotion she felt this morning at seeing me has caused this fainting fit."

"I think so, also."

Ménard returned, bringing a dozen flasks of various kinds of salts. For a long time all their cares were useless. Sister Anne did not recover her consciousness, and Constance was in despair. At last a long sigh announced that the young mute was returning to life, and presently she opened her eyes. Her first look was for her son; he, still too young to realize his mother's danger, had not given up his play. Sister Anne took him

in her arms and kissed him; then she looked about her, as if to thank them for their care.

"Come and rest now," said Madame de Montreville. "This day has brought back all your sorrows; you need to forget them in sleep."

But, instead of accompanying Constance, Sister Anne took her by the hand and led her back to the piano, making signs to her to seat herself.

"No, tomorrow," said Constance. "The music excites you too much now; you shall hear it again tomorrow."

But Sister Anne clasped her hands, and extended them toward her; and her eyes were so expressive, they asked with so much eagerness for what she desired, that Constance had not the courage to refuse. She sat down again to the piano, while Ménard remarked, in a low tone,—

"This woman loves music passionately. They should have taught her to sol-fa-mi."

Constance began an air, but Sister Anne stopped her, and shook her head decidedly, as if to say, "That is not the one." Madame de Montreville tried another, but still the young mute was not satisfied; at last Constance recalled the fact that she was singing a ballad when she was interrupted. She sang it anew, and scarcely had she begun, when Sister Anne's excitement returned, and the attention she gave the song showed this to be the one she wished to hear.

"See now; it was this ballad that agitated

her," said Constance, "and it is the one which Frederic is so fond of."

She had not finished these words, when the young woman took her hand, pressed it forcibly, and made an affirmative sign, which Madame de Montreville did not understand. She looked at Dubourg, and he said to her, in a low tone, —

"I assure you, sometimes she does not know what she is doing; she thinks she sees her lover everywhere. Love has turned her head."

Sister Anne's excitement was somewhat calmed. The tears started from her eyes. She wept, but still she appeared to be comforted. Constance looked at her tenderly, and repeated often, —

"Poor little thing! He was very guilty; how could he have deserted you?"

For some moments all those who surrounded Sister Anne were silent. Constance took her usual means for restoring cheerfulness to the young mute, and lifting little Frederic carried him in her arms to his mother. The young woman looked at her benefactress with gratitude, covered her little son with kisses, then rose and prepared to retire to her room.

Constance insisted on accompanying her to the pavilion in the garden, and there left her, with some last words of encouragement.

"Remember that your troubles are ended," she said, "and be hopeful. Yes, I am sure that your betrayer can be restored to sentiments more

worthy of a man who has loved you ; he can never forget you entirely. Perhaps Dubourg was not well informed. Dry your tears ; I'm sure you will see him some day ; and how could he ever leave you if he saw you with this dear child in your arms ? ”

These sweet words sank into Sister Anne's heart, who cherished the beautiful hope that Constance had awakened, and was less unhappy because of it. Madame de Montreville returned quietly to her own apartment. The sight of the misery from which she had saved her new friend caused her an involuntary sorrow, and Frederic was not there to distract her from sad thoughts, to make her forget everything else for him ; she had never been separated from him for so long a time, and this absence increased her melancholy.

Before retiring Ménard said to Dubourg, —

“ This has been a very stormy day. ”

“ Yes, ” responded his friend, “ and I fear it will be followed by more dreadful storms. If this young woman fainted when she heard the ballad that Frederic was accustomed to sing to her, what will happen when she sees him, and when she learns that he is married to another ? Ah, Monsieur Ménard, this idea occupies me incessantly. ”

“ I can believe that ; it has really destroyed my appetite. ”

“ Let us endeavor to prevent this catastrophe. ”

“ By all means ; I ask nothing better. ”

"Just think that it involves the repose, the happiness, and even the honor, of your pupil, and that his faults will reflect upon us."

"Pardon me. A fault of syntax or of Latin verse is all very well; but I certainly never taught him to betray young girls. It is rather your bad counsels that have perverted him."

"Monsieur Ménard!"

"Monsieur Dubourg!"

"Let us go to bed."

"Recte dicis."

CHAPTER XV

THE RETURN OF FREDERIC. CONSTANCE AND SISTER ANNE

DUBOURG had been staying at Madame de Montreville's house for ten days, and he incessantly pondered as to how he could prevent the disastrous effect which the sight of Frederic would inevitably produce upon Sister Anne, for he saw that every day increased the attachment of Constance to her protégé, and the gratitude of the poor mother toward her benefactress. The difficult task of separating them assumed colossal, and in his eyes, insurmountable proportions; what excuse could he offer for desiring to part them, since Constance repeated frequently that she could not pass the day without Sister Anne and her son, and the young mute when near her gentle protectress appeared to forget her misfortune, to feel her sorrows less vividly.

Frederic was expected and might return at any time. Constance was disturbed at his delay; she had lost in a measure the charming gayety which had formerly distinguished her, often there were tears in her eyes. It was at such times as these that Sister Anne would endeavor to console

her, and make her feel that her husband would return soon.

"Is it possible that he no longer loves me?" said Madame de Montreville sometimes.

The young mute took her hand and led her to the mirror, and she seemed to say to her, —

"Look at yourself; how can he fail to love you?"

"Alas!" said Constance in answer, "you were forgotten, and you are as pretty as I am."

The Count of Montreville, who had intended to pass some days in the country, was kept in Paris from an attack of the gout. Dubourg was well pleased with this, and, not knowing that the Count had ever met Sister Anne, did not realize that he could have helped them all out of their difficulties.

At last Constance received a letter from her husband, in which he told her that unexpected business had delayed his return, but that he now had affairs so in hand that he could bring them to a prompt conclusion.

Frederic's letter was tender and sympathetic, and he appeared very anxious to see his wife. But Constance was not quite satisfied; to her his long absence indicated that his love was lessening. He was not there, so she could weep; in his presence she always concealed her tears. It was Sister Anne to whom she confided her troubles, and on whose bosom she poured her tears and found sweet consolation.

Dubourg regarded the delay in Frederic's return as so many days of clear gain, and he said to Ménard,—

“Let us try to spend this time in preventing the meeting of these two lovers.”

“Let us prevent it, by all means; that is my opinion also.”

“But I have been trying for ten days, and I have not found a way yet.”

“My faith! I am more fortunate than you; I found something yesterday.”

“Well, speak quick; what was it?”

“It was my recipe for making milk punch; I thought I had lost it forever.”

On leaving his wife, Frederic had gone to the farm to discover what had become of Sister Anne and her son, for he was eager to see the child. But from the good villagers he learned that the young mute had long ago started for Paris with her child. He knew not what to think, and he was in complete despair, when the messenger from his father arrived, bringing the customary sum of money and various little gifts which the Count sent to his liberator, which proved that M. Montreville did not know that Sister Anne had left the farm, and that she had not reached the house of her protector in Paris.

Frederic was broken-hearted, and the farm people shared his sorrow, deeply regretting that they had allowed Sister Anne to leave them; but how

could they have resisted her determination? What had become of her? What could she do in Paris without a friend, without a protector? If they had known that the unfortunate girl had been wickedly despoiled of all she possessed, and reduced to beggary, their sorrow would have been deeper still.

Frederic remained only one day at the farm. He then started for Paris, making inquiries all the way along, in the hope of finding some traces of Sister Anne. When he reached Paris he did not stop at his house, for he did not wish anyone to know of his return, in order that he might have time to search in the city for the young mute and her son. For more than eight days he traversed the immense city, investigating its most remote localities, its most deserted and most populous quarters, mounting often to the garrets, and inquired everywhere if anyone had seen a young mute with her child; but his researches were all fruitless; he could not discover a single clue to put him upon the traces of Sister Anne. His heart was torn, and he at last decided to return to Constance. He never dreamed that he should find with her what he had been seeking so far away.

Every day Dubourg stationed himself as ambuscade upon one road, and placed M. Ménard as a scout upon the other, so as to warn him of Frederic's arrival. There were but two roads

which led to the country house, so he was certain he should not miss his friend ; but one morning M. Ménard, who had carried Horace with him, and was reading an ode, did not look up as the one for whom he was watching passed him, and Frederic hurried, unannounced, into the presence of Constance, who was alone, and thinking of her husband.

She raised her eyes, uttered a cry of joy, and threw herself into his arms. All the sorrows of his absence were forgotten upon her husband's breast, and Frederic responded to her joy with every mark of tenderness. After the first few moments, which were given up to the pleasure of his return, Constance said to him, —

“Since you went away I have taken an unfortunate woman into the house. Oh, I hope you will love her as I do.”

“Everything you do is right, my dear Constance ; your heart cannot go astray, so I am sure your kindness is well bestowed.”

“Oh, she is a young woman and very interesting. She has been the victim of unfortunate love, and we all feel very sorry for her. Her betrayer abandoned her with the most charming baby, — I am perfectly foolish about it ; he is called Frederic, like you. But what is the matter with you, my dear ? You are pale ; you tremble.”

“Oh, I am overtired, perhaps ; and it is the excitement of seeing you again.”



Frederic sat down, for he could not stand. The information just given him by Constance had roused an overpowering emotion. He looked about him in a quiver of expectation.

"And this woman, this child ; where are they ?" he asked in a trembling voice.

"They sleep in the pavilion in the garden. But I see her ! Come, come quick, my friend !" said Constance, running to meet Sister Anne, who was approaching with her son. "My husband has returned, and I am so happy. Now nothing is lacking for our happiness."

Constance took the young mute by the hand and led her into the apartment, where her husband still was. When she perceived Frederic, Sister Anne gave a heart-breaking cry. She ran and threw herself into his arms, and fainted as she pointed to her boy.

Frederic held up Sister Anne with one hand. Her head had fallen upon his breast, as if she were dead. With the other hand he covered his eyes, and seemed to shrink from looking about him. His son was at his feet, still clinging to his mother's hand ; and Constance, agitated and trembling, beheld in astonishment the strange scene.

In one moment a thousand sensations seemed to agitate Frederic's wife. She flushed ; her eyes expressed surprise and anxiety. She trembled, and evidently endeavored to repulse the thought

which entered her heart. Her eyes were fixed by turns on Sister Anne and on her husband, and seemed asking for the truth. Her first instinct was to run to Sister Anne and tear her from Frederic's arms.

"What is the matter? What's the meaning of this state? Why should she be so excited at seeing you?" murmured Constance as she looked at Frederic. "Answer me, my dear. Do you know this young woman?"

Frederic had not the strength either to respond or to look at Constance; but he suddenly saw his son. He took him in his arms and covered him with kisses. Then a frightful blow struck the heart of Constance; all the truth was unveiled to her.

Dubourg arrived, followed by Ménard. When he saw Frederic he suspected what had happened, and ran quickly to the help of Sister Anne, crying, —

"She has fainted again; I wager this is another attack of delirium. Oh, I told you this unfortunate woman loses her reason at times."

Constance made no reply. She abandoned Sister Anne to the care of Dubourg and Ménard. She approached her husband, who still held the baby in his arms.

"He is charming, is he not?" she said, in a half-stifled voice, her eyes still fastened upon her husband.

Frederic kept silence. Constance seized the child and tore it roughly from his arms, but instantly repenting of this movement, and ashamed that she was not quite mistress of herself, she covered the child with kisses, and exclaimed sorrowfully, "Poor little thing! you are not to blame."

Dubourg and Ménard had carried Sister Anne to the pavilion, and Frederic and Constance remained alone, with the child. Frederic kept his eyes fixed upon the ground, seemingly unable to meet those of Constance, who was seated at a little distance from him, holding little Frederic on her knees. She tried to restrain her tears, but she could not gather strength to speak, and for several moments the silence was unbroken. At last Frederic lifted his eyes and saw his wife caressing Sister Anne's son. At this sight, he was on the point of abasing himself at the feet of Constance, and confessing everything, when Dubourg entered suddenly.

"Never mind; I hope it will amount to nothing," he said softly to Frederic, and made a little sign so that he should not betray himself. "This young mute is crazy again," he said aloud. "She thinks she sees her lover everywhere. Oh, I have advised madame several times not to keep her here."

"Indeed," Frederic murmured, while he endeavored to regain his composure; "I do not understand what has happened. I have been so

touched at the sight of this unfortunate woman that I hardly knew what I was doing."

Constance said nothing. She gazed at Dubourg and her husband.

"I came after the boy," said Dubourg, approaching to take the child.

"Leave him," said Constance; "Frederic will take care of that."

Frederic was distressed. He could not endure his wife's eyes. In vain Dubourg said to him softly, —

"Good Heavens! keep your head. Remember, it is her happiness which is concerned."

At this moment M. Ménard ran in, all excitement.

"She has come to her senses," he said softly to Dubourg, "but it is impossible to keep her still in her room. She's the very devil himself. She absolutely will see him. She is running around the garden like a crazy woman."

"And why did you leave her?"

Dubourg hastily left the apartment.

"What is the matter now?" said Constance. "Is she worse?"

"No, madame," replied Ménard, who did not know what he ought to say; "but I am afraid her head—oh, these women!—love—quid femina possit."

"I must take care of her!" cried Constance. "I will take the little boy to her, — perhaps when

she sees him ! Will you not come with me, Frederic ? Don't you want to help me take care of this poor unfortunate ? ”

Frederic hesitated. He did not know what he ought to do. He was eager to see Sister Anne again ; he was heart-broken at her condition. But if he saw her, he was afraid he should betray himself. At that moment loud cries were heard. It was Sister Anne, who was running about the garden like an insane person. Dubourg and the servants ran after her. When the people of the house saw her excitement and how wildly she ran through the pathways of the garden, they did not doubt that she had lost her reason. Dubourg did his best to strengthen this idea, for it might prevent them from suspecting the truth.

Sister Anne saw Frederic through one of the windows of the ground floor. She ran instantly ; she reached the apartment, and, quick as thought, threw herself into Frederic's arms. Constance stood near him, but she pushed her aside with a desperate and jealous air, as if she would say, “ I only have a right to this place.”

All the servants had gathered at the door of the room to look at this scene. Constance's heart was pierced when she saw Sister Anne in her husband's arms ; but she did not lose her composure, and, approaching the group of servants, said to them in a trembling voice, “ Go away, my friends ; this unhappy woman has become insane ;

but we will use every possible means to restore her to calmness."

The servants went away, and Ménard ran in search of Dubourg, who was always his refuge in difficult moments. Sister Anne remained with her son, between Frederic and Constance.

The young mute clung to Frederic, who had not the courage to repulse her. She smiled at him, she took his hands, and placed them on her heart. She showed him her son ; but at the same time her anxious eyes rested upon Constance, who was seated a few steps away, her face covered with her hands, unable to bear the sight of what was passing before her ; tears stifled her, at last they gushed forth, she sobbed. Sister Anne shivered ; Constance's trouble disturbed her greatly ; while Frederic could not contain himself, and ran to throw himself at the feet of his wife, who did not look at him, but gently pushed him away.

"Go, go," she said to him. "This unfortunate has a right to your love ; this child is your son. Console her for all she has suffered since you deserted her. I know the truth now. She is not crazy ; she has found her betrayer, the father of her child."

Frederic was crushed. He knelt before Constance, pale and trembling, while Sister Anne fixed her eyes upon him and seemed to be waiting for what he would say. Frederic, taking the hand of Constance, covered it with tears and kisses.

On seeing this a plaintive groan escaped from the young mute, who fell fainting upon the floor.

Constance hastened to bring her help. "Go away," she said to Frederic. "The sight of you is too much for her. Oh, you can trust her to me. I will be just the same friend to her as ever."

Frederic made no response; he went out quite distracted, and Dubourg and Ménard ran toward him. "It is useless to make any pretence," he said to them. "Constance has perceived the truth; she knows all."

"Well, if she knows all," said Ménard, "there is no use in concealing anything."

Constance lavished all her cares upon Sister Anne, and at length the young mute opened her eyes. When she saw Frederic's wife, her first impulse was to push her away. Then glancing about her, she evidently looked for Frederic. Constance showed her her son, and he held out his little arms toward her. Sister Anne, who seemed deeply touched by Constance's kindness, looked at her with less jealousy; but she quivered all over, her teeth shut hard, her eyes closed anew, and a frightful pallor overspread her countenance.

Constance had her carried to the pavilion, where they laid her on the bed. A burning fever attacked her, a real delirium deprived her of her senses. Her unquiet glance roamed about her everywhere. She recognized no one; she even drove away her child.

“Poor little thing! I will not desert her,” said Constance; and she passed the entire day seated beside Sister Anne’s bed. When evening came, seeing that she was a little calmer, she ventured to leave her; but she stationed her most careful servants with her, and insisted that they must warn her of the slightest change in the poor mute’s condition.

When Constance again entered her apartment, Frederic was waiting for her. How different was this day of reunion from those they had formerly enjoyed! Constance was silent; a thousand feelings agitated her; her bosom heaved with emotion, but she tried to conceal what she suffered, and appeared calm before her husband. Frederic, like a criminal awaiting his sentence, remained immovable beside his wife, whose goodness made him realize his faults with new bitterness. He approached her at last, and, not venturing to speak to her, threw himself upon his knees before her.

“What are you doing?” cried Constance, with great sweetness. “Don’t kneel to me, dear; you have done no wrong to me. Oh, you should fall on your knees before her whom you have betrayed and abandoned; it is there that you have wrongs to repair. I have no right to complain. Your fault is common with all men. You knew this unfortunate before you married me; she became a mother. But the world would consider your conduct very natural. Far from blaming

you, many would consider it perfectly right that you should desert a woman whom you did not wish to take for your wife; but I confess I have a different standard from these selfish people who seem to make a merit of the tears they cause to flow. What dreadful consequences have followed your sin! If you knew all that this unfortunate creature has suffered! She has been a prey to the most frightful misery; she was on the point of perishing from starvation when I saved her. She was dying with your son. Ah, Frederic, do you realize the remorse you should feel? You are weeping. Oh, my friend, let your tears flow; I would rather lose your heart than believe you unfeeling.

“Listen to me. You have found again the mother of your child, whom you must never again abandon. If you will leave her to me, I will provide for her. She shall live in a house which I will buy in some beautiful country; she shall lack nothing. Her son is charming; I should like to be a mother to him; but it would be cruel to separate her from her child, who can remain with her and yet receive a good education. When he is grown up, you will decide his fate; and rest assured I shall be contented, no matter what your decision may be. This is what I purpose to do for her whom you once loved; but it is possible this plan does not suit you. Perhaps, when you saw this unfortunate, your love for her revived;

perhaps you love her still. O Frederic! I beseech you, be sincere! Let me read in the bottom of your heart. I will make any sacrifice to assure your happiness. Yes, dear love, I would endure anything, except to see you filled with regret for another. If you love her, if she still pleases you, I will go away, I will bury myself on one of my estates; you will see me no more, and you will be free to keep near you the mother and her child."

Constance could no longer restrain the tears which almost suffocated her. She had maintained her composure with great difficulty up to this point; but her courage quite disappeared when she proposed to Frederic to leave him entirely.

"Could I leave you?" he cried, pressing her in his arms. "O Constance! can you believe that I have ceased to love you for a moment? No, I swear to you, you alone possess my heart. I feel how great my faults have been. I wish to provide for the future of Sister Anne; I owe it to her. When I saw her again, could I fail to experience great emotion? And this child,—yes, I love him. I should like to make him happy; and you cannot blame me for that. I approve all your plans, all your projects. I know how good your heart is, and the nobleness of your soul. Ah, how few women there are who would act as you have done! Decide everything, then; take Sister Anne away; let her go tomorrow."

"Tomorrow! Oh, no, dear; the unfortunate is very, very ill. She must not leave here until she has entirely recovered. I will only ask this one thing,—that you avoid her while she is here. Your presence can only do her harm. Promise me that you will not see her. It is the only sacrifice I ask of you."

"Oh, I will do anything that you command."

"As soon as her health is restored, I will take her myself to her new home. I will not leave her until I am sure that she lacks nothing."

Frederic folded Constance tenderly in his arms. Her goodness rendered her still more dear to him. A woman should never employ any other weapon than this. Reproaches and complaints drive away a husband; kindness and indulgence are sure to recall his tenderness.

Constance found happiness again in the arms of her husband. He swore to her that he loved her alone, and she believed his oaths. Could she live without his love?

Early the next morning Constance hurried to the pavilion in the garden, while Frederic went to tell Dubourg and Ménard of his wife's noble conduct.

"There are none like her," said Dubourg. "Preserve her like a precious treasure; you cannot love her too much. You do not know how rare she is."

"There is no doubt," said Ménard, "that the

conduct of Madame de Montreville is worthy of one of Plutarch's heroines, and also that of Cuni-gonda, wife of Henry II. You know she handled a hot iron to prove her chastity, and I know nothing more beautiful in all history."

Sister Anne was still in an alarming condition; she recognized no one; but the poor unfortunate seemed every moment searching for someone, and stretched her arms eagerly and longingly toward the unknown. Constance watched over her, and saw that she lacked nothing. She herself sent for a physician, and placed beside the invalid an old and tried servant, who did not leave her for a moment. Constance then took the little Frederic in her arms and carried him to her husband.

"Love him well," she said. "By making him happy you will repair some of the wrong you have done his mother. Oh, I seem to love him as if he were my own son. As soon as I saw him a strange presentiment told me that he belonged to you; and, far from loving him less, this idea makes him more dear to me."

Frederic embraced his son. The child often spent a large part of the day with him, for the poor little fellow was now deprived of his mother's caresses. She was possessed by violent delirium, and lay at the point of death for fifteen days. During this time Constance watched beside her unweariedly, in the pavilion. She would not yield

to anyone the care of the sick woman, whom she insisted on watching and sustaining in the most cruel moments of her delirium. She overcame fatigue; she was so absorbed in Sister Anne that she did not recognize her own discomfort. In vain Frederic besought her to take care of her health, to rest a little.

"Let me watch," said Constance. "It seems to me that in what I do for her I can repair a part of the evil that you have caused her."

Frederic did not know a moment's peace until he was assured that Sister Anne was out of danger. He was eager to see her again; but he had promised his wife not to enter her presence, and how could he break his promise, after all that Constance had done for him? Often did he approach the pavilion, where the unfortunate girl was sheltered, and waited impatiently until someone came out who could give him news of Sister Anne; but when Constance approached him he tried to conceal his anxiety. He feared to let her see what an interest he took in the young mute.

Thanks to the assiduous care of Frederic's wife, the young invalid was restored to life; her delirium disappeared; she recognized her child; she pressed him again to her heart, and did not wish to be parted from him. When she saw Constance for the first time, a sudden trembling possessed her; but presently she regained her self-control. She seized the hand of her bene-

factress and covered it with tears and kisses. She seemed to ask pardon for the wrong she had done her, the suffering she had caused her.

"Poor, unfortunate child!" said Constance to her, pressing her hand tenderly. "I will always be your friend. I must try to restore happiness to you. I love you, and I love your child. From this time his future and yours are assured. Do not refuse me this pleasure. It is a debt that I must pay. Your son is charming. His happiness will some day make you forget your troubles. Take courage; you can still be happy."

Sister Anne was silent, and her eyes seemed to say this was impossible. Constance herself did not believe anyone could ever forget Frederic; but, when we are consoling others, it is not necessary to be entirely truthful. The young mute looked eagerly about the room, but soon her eyes rested again upon her benefactress. She seemed to resign herself to her fate, as if she said to her, "I will do whatever you say."

Madame de Montreville assured her husband that Sister Anne was safe, but that convalescence would be necessarily slow. The physician said it would be some time before she could travel; but the vicinity of the garden was fortunate, since the fresh air would enable her more quickly to regain her strength.

Frederic learned with joy that his victim would be restored to health, and each day the desire to

see her, if only for a moment, tormented him. Moreover, another thing troubled him. When the young mute was very ill they would bring to him his son, who would spend a part of the day with him. Frederic grew accustomed to seeing him constantly, and had begun to know the sweetness of a father's love, a sentiment which does not diminish with time or absence. He dared not let his wife know the eagerness he felt to see Sister Anne again, but he was not afraid to inquire after his son.

"My dear," said Constance, "he is now the only consolation of his mother; you surely would not deprive her of that. Later, when time has calmed her suffering a little, I do not doubt that she will send him to you sometimes; but just now she needs him with her constantly."

Frederic was silent. He tried to conceal what he felt, but Constance looked at him and seemed to read the bottom of his heart.

Sister Anne recovered her strength slowly; it was only at the end of several days that she was able to descend to the garden, supported by Constance's arm and accompanied by her son. While she led forth the young convalescent, Constance looked anxiously about, afraid lest she might see Frederic; but she had told him that Sister Anne would go out for a little while, and had warned him to keep out of sight, and Frederic, who knew that his appearance might excite the convalescent too much, remained in his own apartment.

Sister Anne was calmer, but her tranquillity seemed rather the result of profound discouragement than entire resignation. She did not look about her; her eyes were fixed constantly upon the earth; she did not even fasten them upon her son. She no longer wept, but the expression of her features showed how deeply she was suffering; still, her strength gradually returned, so that she was presently able to go out alone, and walk about the pavilion with her little boy.

In a few days Madame de Montreville expected to leave, with Sister Anne and her son, for the home where she intended to establish them. Frederic fully approved of his wife's plan; but he was eager to see once more the woman he had loved so deeply, and who, he was very sure, loved him still.

He knew that every day at dawn Sister Anne went with her son to an arbor at a little distance from the pavilion. One morning he rose while Constance still slept. It was almost sunrise. He could not resist the temptation to see the young mute and her boy; he would not speak, he would not show himself; but he would see her once more. She was to go the next day, and this would be his last opportunity to satisfy the desire that tormented him.

Frederic dressed noiselessly and approached the bed where Constance slept. She seemed restless, but her eyes were closed. She slept, and he could

take advantage of this moment. He hurried softly from the house and entered the gardens. The dawn had hardly begun to dissipate the shadows of the night; all was still in repose. He walked swiftly toward the arbor, which was Sister Anne's favorite retreat. His heart beat furiously. The moment recalled to him the delightful hours of his first love, when he looked eagerly through the wood of Vizille, to discover the young mute upon the bank of the brook where they were accustomed to meet.

She had not yet reached the arbor; but she would probably be there within a quarter of an hour. He seated himself upon the bench where she generally placed herself, and from which he had a good view of the pavilion, where she slept with her boy. Frederic fixed his eyes upon that spot; his heart was full; his soul cherished again the sweet emotions which he had always experienced when he saw Marguerite's miserable cottage. For a moment he forgot all that had passed. He waited impatiently until she came out. It seemed almost as though he should see her coming toward him, leading her little flock of goats.

Time passes quickly in such memories. Suddenly the door of the pavilion opened. A child appeared; it was his son. Frederic was about to run forward to meet him, but he recalled the promise he had given Constance. If he approached the pavilion he should be seen by Sister Anne;

she could not be far behind her child; he must avoid her eyes. He passed behind the shrubbery, and there, concealed by the thick verdure, he waited, trembling, until she appeared.

He had scarcely left the arbor before the young mute issued from the pavilion, holding her little boy by the hand. Frederic could not remove his eyes from her. She was dressed in a simple white gown; her hair was knotted negligently and fell softly over her brow, which revealed plainly her sorrow and suffering. She smiled when she looked at the boy, then paused, glanced into the garden and sighed deeply.

Frederic gazed at her eagerly. The pretty dress in which he saw her seemed to increase the charms which she still possessed. She advanced toward him. She was coming to the arbor. He scarcely breathed. She seated herself upon the bench; she was very near him; only a few branches separated them; but he heard her sighs; he could count the beatings of her heart. How melancholy she seemed! Alas! who would console her now? He had caused all her sorrow, and he could not put an end to it. The baby threw its little arms around its mother's neck. He seemed to wish to cheer her by his caresses. She pressed him to her heart; but she could not restrain her tears. Frederic was no longer master of himself. He heard her sobs. He forgot his promise. He no longer knew anything but the tears of Sister Anne, which

smote him to the heart. He quickly brushed aside the branches which separated him from her. He was at her feet, and his hands clung to her, while he cried, "Forgive me!"

When she saw Frederic, Sister Anne started, as if she would rise and fly; but she had not the strength to do so. She fell back upon the bench; she turned her eyes upon him, and an invincible power forced her toward her lover. He was on his knees; he was begging her forgiveness; she had not the courage to repulse him. She put her son in his arms; then she pressed Frederic to her heart. At this moment a shriek was heard from the distance. Frederic, troubled and startled, came out of the arbor and looked on all sides, but saw no one. He returned to Sister Anne; but she had already taken her son and hastened to the pavilion. He could not keep her; she had escaped from his arms. Her eyes said a sweet farewell to him. She had enjoyed a moment of happiness; but she would not be untrue to her benefactress by staying longer with Frederic.

Sister Anne and her son reëntered their dwelling. Frederic, alone in the garden, was still full of excitement over the pleasure he had experienced in seeing his old love; but this pleasure was mingled with much disquiet. The cry he had heard could not be forgotten. He searched the garden on all sides, but could find no one, and persuaded himself at last that he had been de-

ceived, that the voice came from the fields. For a moment he thought of his wife. Could Constance have seen him? But he rejected the idea. Constance was still sleeping when he left her apartment. He returned to the house. The servants had risen. Dubourg and Ménard came out into the gardens. Frederic dared not go to his wife; he waited until breakfast time to see her.

He walked about with his friends; but he was thoughtful and discouraged.

"Are you troubled because Sister Anne is going away so soon?" said Dubourg to him. "But, dear friend, this is absolutely necessary. A man cannot live under the same roof with his wife and his mistress, even when this last is nothing to him. Women are always jealous, always afraid of accidents, of meetings and recognitions; and, though a woman loves her husband, she cannot sleep quietly under such circumstances."

"Certainly," said Ménard; "you cannot live with a sheep and a wolf. It is like putting a parrot and a canary in the same cage. They will always end by fighting. This does not seem possible with Madame de Montreville; she is an angel of sweetness, and surely the other little woman cannot say a loud word; but, still, *naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurret*. Besides, a Greek philosopher has said, 'If you want hell upon earth, lodge your wife and your mistress together.'"

"Well, Monsieur Ménard, far from having that thought, I should be happy if this unfortunate were already far away. I feel too much; I'm not sure of myself."

"There is only one thing in this world one can be sure of, and that is that one will have indigestion if one bathes too soon after dinner."

The breakfast hour had come, and Constance appeared; she came in as usual and kissed her husband.

"I deceive myself; she knows nothing," said Frederic.

But he noticed that his wife was pale; that her eyes were red and swollen; that her hand trembled in his. He asked anxiously after her health.

"There is nothing the matter with me," replied Constance; "I am not ill; I am not suffering."

But her tone seemed to deny the truth of her words.

The day advanced, and Frederic saw with surprise that Constance made no preparations for her departure and that of Sister Anne. He ventured at last to ask about it.

"I have changed my mind," said Constance, endeavoring to conceal her emotion. "I do not see why this young woman should leave the house. She is happy with us. Her presence is not displeasing to you. On the contrary, her absence might cause you too much regret."

"What are you saying?" cried Frederic.

But Constance went on, with a little coldness in her tone, and without seeming to notice her husband's excitement.

"No, she will not go; it is useless now." As she said these words, Constance went out and shut herself in her own room. Frederic did not know what to think of his wife's change of plan, and that evening, by order of Madame de Montreville, her maid announced to Sister Anne that she would continue to live in the pavilion, and that their journey was postponed for the present.

The young mute heard this news with astonishment, but she could not repress a little secret joy at the prospect of still being near Frederic. She was surprised that the dear friend who had shown her so much kindness did not come herself to explain the change of plan, for several days passed and she did not see Madame de Montreville. The same attentions were shown Sister Anne and her son, but her benefactress did not again visit the dwellers in the pavilion.

Constance passed all her time in her room. She did not say anything to Frederic, but her features wore a look of distress, and her suffering was evident, though she made every effort to conceal it. Frederic dared not question her, or when he did so she always said to him sweetly, "There is nothing the matter."

"Zounds!" said Dubourg; "this is very unnatural. This young woman is in the depths of sorrow, yet she wants the other one to stay here. I can't understand it at all."

"No, nor I either," said Ménard; "but I think, like you, that there is something mysterious about it. Tertullian said that the devil was not so malicious as a woman, and I think Tertullian was right."

CHAPTER XVI

THE CATASTROPHE

SISTER ANNE and her little boy still lived in the pavilion in the garden. The young dumb woman seldom left it, and when she did so it was on rare occasions only that she might walk for a short time in some of the paths which immediately surrounded it. She never went near the house now, for she was always afraid of meeting Frederic, although she cared for him as of old, and her heart longed as eagerly as ever for his attentions and dearly loved presence.

But the husband of Constance dared not approach the pavilion, where his first love dwelt with their child; his wife's unusual manner since the day he had so impulsively taken the poor mute in his arms in the arbor left no doubt in his mind that it was she who had uttered the cry which he had heard and the origin of which he had sought in vain. If Constance had seen him on that occasion at Sister Anne's feet what must she think of his often reiterated promises. Undoubtedly she no longer believed that he loved her alone. He was often almost tempted to throw himself at her feet and assure her that he

loved her always ; but he would have to explain why he had been false to his word, which put him in a very difficult position. In this uncertainty Frederic was silent, hoping by his devotion to banish the suspicions which tormented Constance.

Madame de Montreville never left the house, never went into the garden. Her features revealed her depression, her cheeks were pale ; she vainly tried to smile, but the sorrow which possessed her was expressed in all her actions. She was always sweet, always good, and she appreciated the kindness of her husband, noticing that he did not go to the garden, though she often besought him to walk there.

"Why do you not wish to leave me?" she said to Frederic.

"Why do you wish me to leave you?" Frederic said to her ; "I am always happier when I am with you."

Constance pressed his hand tenderly, and turned away to conceal her tears. She could not forget the scene in the arbor. She saw her husband constantly pressing Sister Anne to his heart. She thought that she no longer possessed his love, and she believed that he was unhappy because he was separated from the young mute. She was willing to sacrifice her peace always to insure his comfort. This cruel thought filled her heart with a thousand torments, and it was difficult for her to conceal her anguish.

"It is impossible for things to continue like this," said Dubourg to Frederic; "your wife is like another woman, and the sadness of the young mute is heartbreaking. Zounds! if these two women stay together they will both die of consumption."

"But what can I do? Sister Anne's fate is entirely in Constance's hands. When I try to speak of it to her, she closes my mouth, or declares again that she will not allow her to go away."

"It is indeed a very embarrassing situation," said Ménard; "and if I were in my pupil's place I know very well what I should do."

"What would you do?" cried Dubourg.

"Heavens! I should do exactly what he is doing."

A very natural event transformed everything in Frederic's home. The Count of Montreville had recovered from his gout, and one morning he arrived at his son's country house.

Dubourg was not aware that the Count knew Sister Anne, but was pleased at his arrival, because he did not doubt that his presence would force Frederic to take a stand. The young man was much disturbed when he saw his father, with whom he never yet had come to an explanation. Should he tell him the truth? Should he let him know that the young mute was in his house? But before he saw his father alone, Constance made him promise that he would not say a word about Sister

Anne to the Count, for she believed that he was ignorant of his son's weakness, and she did not wish him to discover it.

On his part, the Count of Montreville had been much distressed in regard to the fate of the young woman who had saved his life. Informed by his last messenger that she had left the farm to go to Paris, he had searched the entire city without finding her, and could not imagine what had become of her.

On reaching his son's house the Count was struck by the illness and depression of Constance, and inquired eagerly as to the cause of the change. The young woman tried in vain to find a pretext for her indisposition; the old gentleman, being very observing, saw that they were concealing some mystery from him, and determined to discover it. His son was embarrassed in his presence; M. Ménard avoided him as if he was afraid of encountering a reprimand; Dubourg alone seemed glad to see him; everything indicated that something extraordinary was going on in the house.

Constance, knowing that Monsieur de Montreville was accustomed to go to the pavilion to read in the mornings when he came to visit her at Montmorency, hastened to tell him that she had given this place to a young woman and her child, of whom she had taken charge. The Count asked nothing more. He did not dream that this young woman was the one for whom he had been look-

ing so long, and he did not expect to find her at his son's house.

The day after his arrival the Count went out, according to his custom, in the early morning, and turned toward the pavilion in the garden. He was just about to enter, when he recalled what Constance had said to him the evening before, and he turned, therefore, to take his walk on the other side. He had gone but a few steps, when a child came out of the pavilion, and ran toward him. Presently another person seized one of his hands and pressed it to her heart. The Count of Montreville could not repress his surprise in finding himself with the young mute and her child.

Sister Anne, seeing the Count from the window, when he came toward the pavilion, had recognized him immediately, for the features of her protector were graven in her memory, and when he turned in the opposite direction she ran after him.

The young mute showed the greatest pleasure at meeting him; but it was some time before M. Montreville could recover from his astonishment.

"You are here!" he said at last; "and who received you? Do you know the young woman who gave you shelter is the wife of Frederic, your betrayer?"

Sister Anne showed him that she knew, that she had seen Frederic, and that Constance had given her shelter in the pavilion.

Each instant redoubled the Count's surprise; he could not obtain all the information he wished from the young mute, and he was eager to see Frederic.

"Return to the pavilion," he said to Sister Anne. "You will not be there long. You have stayed too long already, poor child!"

Sister Anne obeyed. She returned to the pavilion with her son, whom the old Count could not refrain from tenderly embracing.

Frederic, dreading just what had happened, feared his father would meet Sister Anne, and he had gone in search of him to tell him the truth, when the Count appeared before him. His severe brow informed his son that he had not warned him in time.

"I have seen the person who is sheltered in the garden pavilion," he said, looking at his son attentively, "and I am no longer astonished at the melancholy, at the change, I have noticed in the manners of your wife. Unhappy man! How can you recompense so much love, so much virtue, in such a fashion! How can you endure it that the young woman you betrayed is under the same roof with your wife?"

"I am not guilty in this," replied Frederic, and he related to his father how his wife had received the young mute and her child in his absence. He told him how deeply Constance had become attached to the unfortunate young woman, and all

that had passed since his return. The Count listened to Frederic's story in silence.

"So now," he said, "your wife knows all. She understands that you are the betrayer of this young girl, the father of this child, and yet she wishes that the poor mute shall continue to live in your house?"

"At first she intended to remove her, to take her to one of our estates, where she could have every comfort, and lack for nothing; where her child would be happy. The day of her departure was fixed. I do not know what changed her resolution, but since then she will not allow Sister Anne to be removed."

"And you cannot divine her reason? My son, this conduct is so extraordinary that it must have some secret cause. It is not natural that a woman who loves, who adores her husband should prefer to keep her rival near her, or at least one who has been loved, and may be loved again. But Constance has a soul capable of every sacrifice. She would immolate herself for your happiness. Can you endure this? Do you not see the change that has taken place in her? She can conceal her tears from you, but can she conceal the alteration that has taken place in her charming face, the suffering that is impressed there? Each instant of the day she thinks that you are under the same roof with the mother of your son; that you can see her, speak to her."

"Father! I swear to you it is never so!"

"I believe you truly. But your wife's position is cruel. After tomorrow, your victim will not be under your eyes."

"What! What do you mean, father?"

"Do you blame my resolution?"

"No; very far from that. I feel how I am indebted to you. I do not need to beg you to care for this unfortunate tenderly and — and my son."

"No, monsieur; I know my duty; and the generous intentions of your wife shall be fulfilled. And besides, do you think I can be indifferent to this young woman, and that her son has no right to my love? My heart has become a stranger to the burning passions of youth; but is it therefore closed to true sentiments? Allow me to restore peace, repose, to your wife. It is your duty to make her happy again, by redoubling your attentions and the expressions of your love. In this way, Frederic, you can efface your fault, and repay me for my care of Sister Anne and her son."

Frederic moistened his father's hand with his tears. The Count left him to seek Constance. He did not say a word to her about the young mute; but as he looked at her he admired her, and felt that he must cherish her still more. Constance did not know how to explain the marks of affection which the Count lavished upon her, for his manner was ordinarily cold and formal.

She did not suspect the cause, believing the Count to be ignorant of Frederic's fault.

M. de Montreville sent his servant to Paris, and gave him orders to be at the garden gate, with a carriage and good horses, at dawn the next day. He would take Sister Anne away himself, and he went to the pavilion to tell her of his resolution.

These frequent comings and goings made Dubourg suspect that the Count had a plan in his head.

"We are going to have some changes in the house," he said to Ménard. "Can they restore happiness and pleasure to these walls?"

"Well, we certainly haven't been very gay here lately," said Ménard. "Madame the Countess sighs; my pupil is thoughtful; the young mute says nothing; and even you, dear Dubourg, are not at all like yourself. What ails you?"

"Eh! Do you think I ought to be happy when those I love are suffering? In spite of my philosophy, I cannot be indifferent to the sorrows of my friends."

"As for myself, I am busy all day."

"Yes, but that doesn't interfere with your appetite."

"Do you want me to be ill? Would that make them more cheerful?"

"You don't take enough exercise. You are getting as round as a ball."

"This imbecile of a cook gives us nothing but beefsteaks. How can I help getting fat?"

"I hope a great deal from the arrival of Frederic's father. He has been to the pavilion; he has seen Sister Anne. The situation is going to change, I am certain."

"Oh, do you think we'll have no more beefsteaks?"

"Really, Monsieur Ménard, you were not born to live in France; you ought to go to Switzerland, where they do nothing but eat."

"Monsieur, I was born to live no matter where. When you played the Baron Potoski, you broke the cashbox with your dinners of many courses, and I will not say to you, *Quantum mutatus ab illo*, because I noticed you yesterday at dinner; monsieur ate all the tunny, and I didn't find a bit when I came to it."

"Tunny is very heavy, Monsieur Ménard; it was not good for you."

"Monsieur, I beg you not to bother about my health, and to leave me some tunny next time. You see, at my age, I can give myself indigestion if I please."

While each one in the house gave up himself to his own conjectures, the Count crossed the garden and entered the pavilion. Sister Anne resided on the first floor. It was already night when M. de Montreville prepared to tell her what he intended to do. He paused a moment before he

entered the apartment of the young woman who had saved his life.

“Poor child!” he said. “I am going to make her unhappy. She must be removed from Frederic. She must be separated from him forever. But this is a duty that I am obliged to fulfil, and her soul is too pure and unselfish not to feel that she must give repose to her friend. She is too sensitive to forget that Constance saved her and her boy from the horrors of starvation, and has shown her every kindness.”

The old gentleman reached the apartment of the young mute, who rose and ran to meet him, her eyes expressing the love and respect she felt for him. M. de Montreville considered her for some time in silence. He was deeply touched; but he felt that he must hasten to tell her his plans, that she might be ready the next day.

“My child,” he said to her, “I told you this morning that you could not, you must not, remain longer in this place. Your presence here is death to her who has received you. Constance loves her husband; would you destroy her repose and happiness forever? She conceals the torments she feels; but I have read in the bottom of her heart. You would not wish to send that friend to the grave who saved your child?”

• Sister Anne made an expressive gesture, which indicated that she was willing to sacrifice herself for Constance.

"Well," went on the Count, "you must go away ; you must fly from these places. Fly from them tomorrow at dawn. You must go without seeing your benefactress. I will tell her all your heart would inspire you to say to her. You need not see anyone at the house ; it is useless. There is one especially, — but I do not need to warn you to avoid, to carefully avoid, that person."

Sister Anne was broken-hearted at these words. To go so suddenly, and without preparation ! To go without seeing him, and forever ! It was more than she could bear. She felt her courage abandon her. Her eyes overflowed with tears.

The Count approached her. He took her hand.

"Poor little thing !" he said. "This sudden departure breaks your heart. But in a situation like this delay is a crime. I must tear you from these places ; but I have the right to be severe. Take courage, poor child. It is Frederic's father whom you saved from the brigands ; it is he who asks you to sacrifice yourself for Frederic's sake."

These words had just the effect the Count expected on the young mother. When she learned that he was the father of her lover, she fell at his feet and lifted her hands as if to ask his pardon.

"Rise, rise," said the Count, kissing her forehead. "Unfortunate girl ! If I could only make you happy ! At least you will have an existence free from care from this time on ; and the future of your boy is assured. I shall take you to a farm

which I will give you. A pretty little cottage belongs to it. You will live there. You will be surrounded by faithful people, who will love you dearly. There you will bring up your son. I shall often share your retreat; and before long I hope tranquillity and peace will be restored to your heart."

Sister Anne listened to the Count, whom she was ready to obey. She felt that she would never know happiness again, but she seemed to say, Do what you please with me; I am ready to follow your slightest wishes.

"So, then, tomorrow, at the dawn of day, I will come for you," said the Count. "I wish to go before anyone in the house is awake. A good carriage will wait for us at the garden gate. Make all your preparations for yourself and your son; it need not take you long. You will find everything you need in your new home. Farewell, dear child! Take courage; I will be ready for you at dawn."

The Count left her. Sister Anne was alone. Her boy slept. It was the last night she should pass near Frederic. She must go. She must fly from him forever. This thought overwhelmed her. She sat motionless on the chair near her boy's cradle. A single thought absorbed her: She must go away from him whom she had tried so hard to find, whom she idolized, who seemed to love her still, when she saw him in the arbor. But

she must go ; the repose, the life of her benefactress demanded the sacrifice.

The last hours that she could pass in this dear place flew with the greatest rapidity. Absorbed in her thoughts, she had not yet busied herself with the preparations for her departure. Midnight sounded from the village clock, and the young mute still sat in the chair, near the cradle of her son, in the same position in which the Count had left her.

The melancholy sound of the clock striking the hour roused her from her reverie ; she rose and made a little bundle of necessary things. Her preparations were soon finished, however, and several hours of the night still remained. Should she try to sleep ? No ; she knew this would be a vain attempt. But what thought made her heart beat ? Every one in the house slept ; she would profit by the last moments that remained to her, and pass them near him. She did not wish to see him ; she knew that would be breaking her promise to the Count,—the promise she owed to her benefactress. She would not let Frederic know it, but she would say a last farewell to him. She knew which were the windows of his apartment. She would at least see the place where he slept. It seemed as if she could go with less unhappiness after that, and that Frederic would hear her farewell, in his sleep.

Sister Anne hesitated no longer ; she placed

upon a bench the packages she had just made, then stood the lamp which lighted her room on the hearth. Her son was sleeping soundly; she looked at him and her tears fell as she bent over his cradle and thought that she was about to part forever from his father.

Not a sound was heard as she emerged softly from the pavilion. The night was dark, but she knew the garden; her feet scarcely touched the earth; like a shadow, she flew rapidly through the pathways she must traverse, and at last she was before the house. Frederic's apartment was to the right on the first floor. She knelt before his windows; she extended her arms to him; she addressed to him her last farewells.

Bathed in tears, she supported her head on one of her hands, but she could not turn her eyes from the place where she knew her lover was. Sister Anne abandoned herself to despair, to her love, to her regrets. She had been gone from the pavilion a long time; the hours rolled away, she could not tear herself from the place; but she must leave it at last.

The unfortunate creature made a final effort. She rose; broken-hearted she turned away and staggered through the alleys, scarcely able to repress her sobs. Suddenly a brilliant light illuminated the garden. Sister Anne lifted her eyes; she could not imagine what produced this brightness. She advanced; the light appeared more

startling; the obscurity of the night gave place to a frightful clearness,—it was fire, the flames of which lighted all the windings of the garden! As this idea struck her, seized with an indescribable terror, Sister Anne no longer walked; she ran, she flew toward the pavilion. The flames poured in volumes from the windows of the first floor.

A frightful cry escaped from the breast of the young mother. She saw nothing but her son, whom she had left in her apartment, alone in the night. It was enveloped in flames!

In her despair she found new strength. She forced her way into the pavilion. A thick smoke filled the stairway; but a mother knows no danger. She must save her child. She mounted, she searched. She could not find the door, which the smoke concealed from her. Her hands sought it in vain. At last the flames guided her; she penetrated into the apartment. Everything was on fire. A package of clothing had rolled to the light, and the flame had rapidly communicated to all the objects. Sister Anne ran to the cradle, which the fire had just reached. She seized her child. She knew not in what direction to turn; she could not get out. The flames surrounded her on every side; her limbs were burning. She wanted to call. She felt herself dying. At that moment nature yielded to her need. Her voice broke the bonds which enchained it. The unfor-

tunate fell; but she pronounced distinctly the words, "Frederic, come and save your son!"

The fire at the pavilion had been seen by the people at the house, several of whom had not been able to sleep. Frederic was horrified; he rushed from his apartment, calling for help on all sides. Each one rose and hastened out. The universal cry was, "The fire is at the pavilion!" Everyone ran; but Frederic was first of all. He braved death to reach Sister Anne, and entered her apartment a few moments after she had lost consciousness. He took her in one arm, and with the other he held his son. He crossed the flames; he was in the garden; he had saved both of them.

At the news of the danger everyone followed Frederic. Constance was not the last to fly after the footsteps of her husband. It was she who received Sister Anne in her arms, and lavished every care upon her. She had her carried, fainting, to her own apartment. The entire household surrounded the young mother, whose body bore the cruel marks of the fire. Her child had not suffered at all, and they waited impatiently until she opened her eyes, to show her that he was safe.

At last a sigh escaped her lips; the light returned to her eyes; Constance showed her the little one. "My boy!" exclaimed Sister Anne covering his face with kisses.

These words threw the observers into the greatest astonishment. They listened. They looked at Sister Anne. They wondered if they had heard aright.

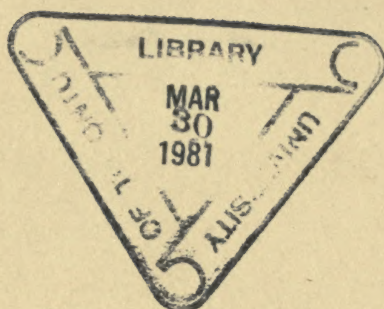
"O my God!" said the young mother; "it is not a dream! You have given speech to me again! O Frederic! I can tell you how much I loved you, how much I love you still. O madame! pardon me. But I feel that I shall not enjoy very long this gift that has been returned to me. What I have suffered today has exhausted my strength. I am about to die. But my son is saved. Ah! do not weep for me."

The poor victim made a great effort to pronounce these words. Her eyes grew dull; her hands were icy; already a threatening pallor overspread her features. Frederic fell on his knees beside her. Her hand was in his clasp, and he covered it with kisses. The Count had forgotten everything in his sorrow. Constance endeavored to recall her to life by reminding her of her son. Each was differently touched by this heartrending scene. Dubourg had never shed tears; but as he held the head of Sister Anne he was shaken with sobs.

"Why do you weep for me?" asked Sister Anne, making a last effort to speak. "I could not have been happy; but I die peacefully. Take care of my boy. Madame, he is fortunate in your arms. You will be his mother. Farewell, Fred-

eric! and you, his father! Oh, pardon me for having loved him!"

Sister Anne threw a last look on Constance, who pressed the little Frederic in her arms, and closed her eyes, smiling upon her son.



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